



The Rules

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Narrated by alternating unreliable narrators, this dark thriller will have readers on the edge of their seats. No one is safe and everyone is a suspect. It's *Saw* meets *I Know What You Did Last Summer*.

Junior Robin Brisset has no idea what she's in for when she accepts an invitation to one of Callabrese High's most exclusive parties. And when the trademark scavenger hunt begins, Robin must go against every rule she's lived by to survive.

The Rules Details

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From Reader Review The Rules for online ebook

Rayne says

The moment this started to sound like a mix between Ten and They All Fall Down, I knew this had NO BUENO written all over it. But I decided to give it a fighting chance. True, I'd hated the shit out of the two short stories I'd read from these authors, but what the hell? The book was short, kids were dying all over the place, what did I have to lose? Besides several hours of my life I am never getting back, I almost lost my e-reader because that's how hard I wanted to throw it against the wall in frustration with this book.

This ~~rant~~ review might go on for a while, so if you don't want to stick with me all the way to the end, here's the short version: This book really fucking sucks. It's just awful. Like, gouge-your-eyes-out-with-rusty-spoons-and-pour bleach-on-your-ears-in-the-hopes-it'll-get-to-your-brain-and-erase-away-the-terrible-memory-of-having-read-it awful. For those who want to stick around for the long version, I'll throw in some gifs to make the experience a lot livelier.

This book is just like every other YA thriller/mystery about someone hunting down teenagers and killing them in gruesome ways out there, so there must be a set of RULES out there that YA authors shared amongst themselves. Since I am not privy to that particular information, I'll make my own based on what I learned from The Rules.

Rule #1: Insert every single teenage stereotype in there. The more outdated, overplayed and excessive, the better.

The jock with the heart of gold with the secret love for the quiet girl nobody notices? Welcome aboard! How 'bout the mysterious, kinda freaky-looking, weird guy with a vendetta against all the characters? Oh, how about we make the main character the sweet, shy girl nobody acknowledges but who's smarter, kinder, stronger and better than everybody else just 'cuz? The dumb one who gets easily manipulated by everyone, is revered only by how pretty and "easy" she is and goes running at the first sight of trouble? The ambitious social climber willing to step over everyone to get to the top? The gorgeous and ambitious mean girl with a secret who's really not that bad? A group of douche bros who only think about sex and alcohol? Bring them all in. And they are rich and popular and entitled, so of course they are a bunch of horrible people. Oh, but we need some diversity. Here. Have a guy with a Japanese name and a chick with an Indian name and let's cleverly not say anything else about the ethnicity of any other character, especially the crazy one that's in a gang, even though there might be some hints that he's black. It's not racist if we don't say it.

I don't think I've read about a more uninspired and cliched group of characters since Welcome to the Dark House. Not only that, they were also boring as fuck. Not a single one was in the slightest even remotely interesting. The lack of development or believable growth, the absence of layers to their personalities and the way they were used to check every single box in the stereotype checklist made them impossible to like, much less be engaging in the slightest. I care not a single fuck about any of them, not enough to even bat an eyelash when they were killed. It's a murder mystery! I need to care that someone's killing these kids, even if I don't care for the teens themselves. And yet...

Rule #2: To distract from how stereotyped and unoriginal your characters are, give them some stupid little trait. Don't even think about it. It doesn't even have to make sense. Just throw it in there. It's not like they'll notice. It's a YA book after all.

The psycho ex-boyfriend that's on a gang? Yeah, he has a black chihuahua that he adores and takes with him everywhere. See how creative this character is? If he were a normal psycho ex-boyfriend who's on a gang, he would have a more menacing dog, like a Bulldog or a Rottweiler, not a freaking chihuahua! Did I just blow your mind or what?

And the shy girl, you see, she can be a leader and has a really great mind for mystery. You know how? She likes to play Clue. That's right: the mystery authority in this novel got her title by playing Clue with her 8 year old brother. Seriously, hold on to your seats because the character depth here will blow you right out into outer-space.

Rule #3: Make these characters as melodramatic, conniving and suspicious as possible. The more outrageous the better. Give them some really over dramatic rules to live by. Remember, they are teenagers. They need some really hardcore rules to live by. There are social steps to climb, after all. Really important life goals right there. Oh, and start every single chapter with one of those rules. They don't need to make sense or relate to what's going to happen next. Trust me. I write good.

We just don't understand. These kids have been so hardened by life's burdens. Robin has loved Kyle for so long, but she's the coach's daughter and that's against the rules. Romeo and Juliet had it easy compared to them. Oh, and Beth, poor Beth. She had to live outside of the popular group for years. For years, I tell you! She can't trust anyone or all she's worked for will crumble before her. She would not be invited to parties anymore! Think of the parties!

The way this bunch of little shits talk, you'd think they'd gone through the biggest hardships in the history of humanity. Who the fuck has an extremely detailed set of rules to live by? Teenagers at that. And if they do, why are they all based on the one characteristic that's supposed to define them, like the one dimensional chalk outlines that they are? Robin's kind, so all of her rules are about being sweet and kind to everyone. Kyle's all about respecting rules. Larson's a manwhore, so they are all about cheating whenever he can. Beth wants to be popular, so they are all about using people and trusting no one. August has some serious Lannister feelings going on for his dead sister, so they are all about cheesy notions of revenge. Hiro plays the drums, so here's an idea, let's make them all analogies about playing the drums!

Rules #4: Randomly change from POV to POV for no reason at all. The perspective doesn't matter. Just jump back and forth, but for the sake of cohesiveness, keep the same unemotional and sterile and disjointed narrative voice. Nobody needs to care about these stereotypes kids, I mean, they are only going to be murdered, after all.

You have like 14 different characters, might as well use them to see half a page from their perspective, you don't even need a reason. The technique was useful for when one of them was in particular danger at that point, and it was admittedly used in several occasions in the novel, but there were plenty of other times where the narration would shift from one POV to the other for no particular reason, and the interesting thing here is that it almost made no difference at all. The writing in this novel feels particularly disjointed because

the first half of the novel unleashes this torrent of info dumps about the characters, but by the time the second half comes, the narration, all throughout and regardless of the POV it was told from, sounded dry, sterile and stiff. That actively worked against the characters and effectively erased any interest I might've had in them and their role in the novel. The writing was awkward sometimes, riddled with some really odd word choices and sentence arrangements that made the reading experience rather bumpy and uncomfortable. It was not unreadable, but I didn't like the writing and I thought it added nothing to the characters or the atmosphere.

Rule #5: Whenever someone is introduced, shit exposition and info dumps all over the page. Tell everything. Reveal everything you have from the get go. This is a mystery. Who needs mysterious characters with mysterious motivations and pasts, right? Oh, and make those internal monologues as vacuous and cliched as possible, you hear me? Before I forget, also put foreshadowing everywhere. Have every single character utter some line about feeling like someone's going to die tonight or some other bullshit about death being in the air. Instant tension. You're welcome.

Every couple of chapters, even before the horror started, someone would look into the distance and drop some eerie line about feeling like something horrible was going to happen or that someone was going to die. It wasn't enough that whenever one of these assholes was introduced we learned their entire life stories in a matter of seconds along with their particular ambition (hint: popularity!) and a very one-dimensional look at their one trait, delivered with all the grace and subtlety of an elephant on roller-skates, but they would also end their introductions with some cheesy exclamation of "having a bad feeling about this" or feeling like the night would end badly. Every. Single. One. Of. Them. This is the most blatant abuse of foreshadowing I've seen in a while, going heads to heads with Twisted Fate, a book that introduced about 8 POVs into the story to literally just talk about how awful it was that the three main characters never saw coming the horrible, horrible things coming for them. Extreme use of foreshadowing tension does not make. And I know someone's going to fucking die. It's right there in the book's stupid description.

Rule #6: Is the plot stuck? Just have every character hear one his or her companions screaming in horror in the distance. It doesn't matter that you've used that 50 times already. Trust me, it never gets old. Just let them scream in horror at each other. Or better yet, have a chick in hysterics just randomly run away in terror from the group and safety whenever there's a lull in the conversation.

Every time they split up, which was about a dozen times per chapter, someone would hear screams into the distance. I get it, someone's murdering teenagers, but every single character had a moment when they would hear one of his or her companions screaming in horror in the distance and the trick got old really quickly. It was basically a volley of terrified screams aimed at me every couple of pages. If it was meant to chill me or set me on edge, it failed epically, as things are bound to do when you do them about 500 times in the span of less than 300 pages.

And right before someone screamed in terror, some idiot would just run away in terror, sometimes even randomly and right in the middle of a conversation. And by someone, I mean hysterical women, of course. Who else. Quite frankly, all these morons deserved to die.

Rule #7: The action slowing down? Need to get your characters from point A to point B? Scooby-Doo, my

friend. Just steal the basic plot from every Scooby-Doo episode ever.

Oh, no! Someone's missing! You know what that means?

That has worked terribly the last couple of times and has only helped the murderer to kill us even faster. Should we change tactics? Nope.

And then, exactly like Scooby-Doo, a chase would follow the splitting up almost immediately. And predictably. Over and over and over and over again.

Rule #8: Your story could use a bit more tension. Throw wild animals in there. Don't look at me like that. It doesn't need to make sense. Just one more thing hunting down these kids. Pfft, of course a deranged murderer is not enough. What kind of a writer are you? Vicious. Hungry. Wild animal. Go.

I shit you not. A mountain lion. Just randomly strolling around. For no reason whatsoever. I don't even know what the fuck to say about this. They were in front of the ocean, in a very secluded area and nowhere did it say that they were close to some woods or something that would give an inkling as to why a fucking mountain lion decided to crash their murder party. Seriously. A motherfucking mountain lion.

Rule #9: You need some romance in there, some passion. Okay, pick the main girl, obviously, and that guy. Who cares if they'd barely interacted before this? Make it so they are so hot for each other, they can barely keep their hands off each other even if their friends are getting killed one by one. No time like the present for a good make-out session.

You know teenage passion; it comes at the strangest of times and what can you do about it? Does it really matter if all of your friends are dying horribly around you? C'mon. You are the shy girl, he's the school king. This needs to happen now. Blood and guts all over the wall and all. Urges are urges. He's so impossible to resist, with his controlling nature and manipulation, oh, and the way he manhandles you and orders you around to get you to do what he wants. So, so sexy. Wait, is it hot in here or is it me?

Rule #10: Hmm. It seems like you are running out of possible culprits. Here's what you can do. Pick the most unlikely of characters. Give them the shittiest, most nonsensical backstory you can think of and then chalk it all up to insanity, because, you know, "crazy" is the magic word to smooth away all plot holes.

I just love how most YA author think someone being "crazy" can make up for every single inconsistency, lack of logic or sense or just flat out stupidity in their damn plot twist. Really, not insulting or misinformed or lazy in the slightest. Insanity is YA's favorite Deux Ex Machina, and who cares about your twist making sense or fitting into the story, it's all about the shock value of the twist. Perfect example: the murderer in this novel. Insanity should not be the scapegoat of every single fucking twist in a novel, especially when you

base it on a thoroughly absurd and ridiculous psychological state.

Bonus Rule: Some things make no sense, right? Forget about them. Just quickly look away from them, kill some other shitty kids and they'll soon forget all about it.

I'm supposed to forgive how absolutely ridiculous everything in this novel was because I'm supposed to be only entertained by the violence and the mystery of the story. I'm supposed to excuse the vapidity of the characters, the lack of logic in the story and the ginormous plot holes throughout because it's just a short, silly book that's there just to entertain. Fuck that. I see no reason to care for a story that didn't matter enough to whoever put it out there to make sure that the product had some integrity to it, that it offered quality in terms of writing and plotting, at the very least. And I just learned this might be a series.

Paula says

Popcorn drive-in horror - a great summer read. Everyone's a suspect as overprivileged teens get knocked off one by one in bloody, horrifying ways. As it should be.

Elise (TheBookishActress) says

This book features bad plotting, was overtaken by romance, and couldn't be saved by the nonexistent character work.

This has become a recurring theme. So here's an idea: I'm going to write a review, and then you're all going to have to guess whether I'm talking about *Six Months Later*, *Cut Me Free*, *The Cellar*, *Panic*, *The Rules*, or... okay, you get the point. This one is a particularly bad example.

1) The main character had no personality traits beyond a lack of logical sense. She's boring and extremely flat.

Sorry to use this gif twice in one day, but:

2) **The plot is driven entirely by her lack of sense.** Also, suspend your disbelief, because every twist is actually a **plot hole**. Or simply a character being stupid. Nothing makes any sense here.

3) The **romance** plot was boring, unnecessary, and took over the whole book. Can teen ya please stop with the bad-boy heterosexual romances? It's overdone.

See what I mean? I could lodge these complaints for any YA suspense book. Not recommended. And I'm lazy and don't remember any actual plot points, so I'm copy-pasting this review onto every bad YA suspense

book I read in 2016.

Elisabeth says

More of a 3.5

This book changed character views. A Lot. That for me is good and bad. I like to stick with 1 or 2 main characters, but it was also nice to know what everyone was thinking and doing at one point.

This book had an unexpected ending. An ending that I don't think really fit, and I especially didn't like.

Spoilers past this point

August's older sister, and his only real family member, died exactly one year ago. These certain people in whom he invited to the scavenger hunt, all had some part in bullying or doing something mean to her before her death. He invites them to the scavenger hunt in hopes of finding out who had big parts in her death. He had it all planned out.

Until his partial enemy decides to bring an unexpected guest. Robin. Robin had no part in his older sister's death so he had to throw her in someplace to play the game.

Later that night, people are dying unexpectedly. All phones are taken away for no cheating, and all of the car batteries have suddenly disappeared, so everyone was stuck. August also had it planned out on where to have this hunt. In a warehouse in the middle of nowhere. He thought of this so no one would complain of teenagers running around, hooking up, and drinking. Since everyone was stuck and scared for their lives, they all came together to try and find out who is killing people. The scavenger hunt turned from fun, to play my way or you die.

Pixie/PageTurners(Amber) C. says

The Rules is a multi narrator story, but it revolves more around Robin Brisset. Rules are important in life, we each have our own set and we have rules for pretty much everything in our life. Sometimes breaking the rules is the only way to win or in Robin's case survive.

The "cool kids" in Robin's school like to have these scavenger hunt games with amazing prizes. This is the last hunt. Robin is invited out of the blue by an old friend. As the reader, we know that something different is going to happen at this hunt. The host, August, is one of our narrators and he is planning a revenge hunt to pay back "this group of friends" that played a part in his sister's death. Within the first few minutes of the game players are missing and the normal players are not happy with the hunt. It is very different from the others and they know August is up to something.

When players start turning up dead, everyone begins to unravel and their secrets start coming out. The obvious murderer is August but he swears he did not plan the "accidents" that keep happening. He is freaked out because someone is seriously trying to hurt the group. Everyone but Robin seems like a suspect - I can usually figure out "the killer" but The Rules kept me guessing.

The Rules is a hard story to follow - it's choppy and disjointed and I found it hard to connect to any of the characters. I like a good murder mystery, but I was aggravated that some of my questions were left unanswered. Does Robin ever find out who hit her father?

posted on

www.pageturnersblog.com

Nic says

Basically a slasher movie in book form, which was exactly what I expected. Most of the characters are complete stereotypes, but again: what I expected. I came for the entertainment, y'all. I went into this knowing that lots of these characters were going to die, so frankly, I appreciate not being encouraged to get too attached to them.

Plot-wise, this reminds me of Party Games by R.L. Stine, but I like this book a lot more. I think the writing is better; it definitely feels more current. And I find the resolution more satisfying. But there's a similar setup: oddball rich teen boy invites a bunch of other teens to an isolated area for a party that everyone knows will be intentionally creepy. When people start getting killed, the host is a suspect, but acts as horrified as everyone else. What's really going on? For other recent "teens at a party getting murdered" fare, see Ten by Gretchen McNeil, who also blurbbed this book.

Spoilers ahead!

I had sort of guessed that Kyle was involved in the kill-y business. This was mostly for meta reasons: the fact that no one else was suspicious of him made me suspicious. And then he tried to kill August with the electric fence, then tried to pass it off as rage and fear and having thought August was the killer. Which is totally believable, but it made me keep an even closer eye on him.

Also, I knew Drew wasn't dead. No body, no death.

I am SO HAPPY that August survives! Early in the book, I was kind of rolling my eyes, like, "Wow, you guys are making the teen with albinism be a creepy villain? You do know that 'Evil Albino' is a done-to-death trope, right?" And I was surprised that they went that route, given that August's physical characteristics suggested that the authors had done at least marginally more research on the condition than many. His eyes are pale grayish rather than pink or red. He even has brown hair - people with albinism don't always have white-blond hair! It's true! So I was surprised that they'd still make him creepy and evil, and pleased when it turned out that he's not the real villain. So, way to subvert the trope, ladies. Good on you.

In "tropes not subverted," though: another redhead girl YA protagonist who doesn't care about her looks but is considered attractive to everyone? SERIOUSLY? I just complained about this exact same thing in The Brokenhearted. What is UP with all of these modest tomboy-but-naturally-pretty redheads?

Fuzaila ~ is on hiatus says

This book was a vain attempt at horror (or maybe psychological thriller?). I like the original idea - a

scavenger hunt for revenge. It had much potential, but the execution failed miserably. **2.5/5 stars.**

The Rules tells the story of a bunch of teens, who play the scavenger hunt at a party in an abandoned cannery. But things go horribly wrong when one by one, each of them are killed. August DeYoung had planned the party and the hunt in hope of making his friends realise how unfair they were to his sister Alexa, which ultimately lead to her death. But then, August's plans aren't the ones carried out. Or was it? They must all play by the rules, or be ready to die.

WARNING: There's a lot of violence and murder in this book.

The beginning of the book itself was a big NO for me. I knew then and there that I wouldn't like this one. There were so many characters and so many '*rules*'. None of the characters had any depth to them, none of them were made to be likeable. For the first time, *the multiple povs sucked*. There was nothing urging us to read on. The tangled mess of characters and their stupid rules were difficult to follow. At the end of the book, I'm pretty sure I can't even remember most of their names.

And that ending? WTF?! Okay, I geddit, it's a big twist and all, but seriously? Just for the sake of the plot, one of characters just switched on to an entire new personality and turned out to be the killer! I didn't like any part of it. The beginning and the ending seemed to be from two entirely different books. The book obviously lacked good planning.

Maybe if the authors had tried to put some more *emotions* to the characters, it'd have turned out fine. Overall, just a meh book. :/

Leah says

The best way I can think of to describe *The Rules* is a B-movie played on a cable network on a Saturday afternoon. Something you would never seek out on your own, but since it's already there you're just bored enough to settle in and enjoy the ride. This is not a book I would ever pick up in a bookstore, but since it was literally delivered to my door, I figured I might as well see what it was about. I doubt I have to actually tell you this, but don't go into this one expecting highbrow literature. Instead, imagine a slasher flick in book form, complete with severed hands, a budding rock band, a student impregnated by her teacher, teenagers who would rather make out than freak out over the killer in their midst, and a mountain lion. I love that *The Rules* took two people to create.

For the full review and more, head over to The Pretty Good Gatsby!

Adele says

There are few things going for this book. The first being the cover and the ominous sentence on the front: "come out, come out... you won't get too far." And the rest of the synopsis. Other than that, when I started reading the book I was hugely let down. Sure, the book moves quickly, but there isn't a sense of character to the book. The main theme to this novel is revenge, and we have -what feels like to me- a million points of view; when we only actually have 6-10(?) views. I put that question mark there because I don't even know how many views there actually are.

I couldn't really get into the novel, as to the differing views and how quickly the views change. The ways the views change is literally like stop and going really fast in a car. The whole stop-go-stop-go. Whiplash. That's it! How fast the character's change is exactly like whip lash. Sometimes I didn't even know that the points of view changed so I had to reread a lot of parts.

The plot was well planned out, now that I've finished the book. While I was reading The Rules though, with all of the differing views, the whole story feels really messy. Which means that I couldn't really get into it, and I wish I could have! I wasn't as immersed as I could have been if there were less points of views. Honestly because of all the views, it was hard to get the gist of the story until the later quarter of the book.

I can't say that the main character is unreliable, because there are too many character views to even have a main character. I found that a few characters aren't reliable protagonists. It really just seems like there's a main antagonist in a sea of antagonists.

Even though I didn't really enjoy reading it, and prefer the ending overall... I found myself reading it to the end when I didn't really want to. I found the book boring, but I had to find out what happened to one of the characters.

I do like the detail though. And I feel like because we don't get to know these kids as individuals, I only saw them as a group, that the details -gory or not- make up for the fact that we don't get personal with any of the characters.

I enjoyed the ending the best to be honest. There is a considerable amount of character development within this one character. If you've read this book then you know the ending, and honestly I would react the same way.

Before the ending though, when we find out who was responsible for all of this, I literally thought of that meme. The one where Andy Samberg says "Cool motive, still murder." I'm obviously thinking this with sarcastic thoughts though, because what happened to the person behind it all, what happened to them is horrible. I wouldn't wish that on anyone. Aside from that though, I was just so done with the book that I said to myself, "cool motive, still murder." And continued on reading again because I was just so freaking done with this book.

All in all, I wouldn't read this again. The Rules is scattered all of the place, much like this review. There were only a few things that I liked about this book, and they don't really relate to the novel at all, and I can't talk about them because of spoilers.

Melanie (TBR and Beyond) says

I actually had a lot of fun with this one. It wasn't the best written and didn't have the most developed characters but on a pure enjoyment level - I had fun. I think if you enjoy teen slasher flicks then you'd have fun with this one, because that is basically what this is. I wasn't shocked by any means by the ending but that didn't even matter. Good times.

Samantha says

I'd say 4.5, but as I've mentioned in other reviews I rate highly. If I had no real complaints but didn't adore it, it gets a 4. My average rating is 4.

There were lots of really harsh reviews about this book, but I understand there are usually mixed reviews of anything horror related (films, books, etc).

I realize there were a lot of "what the fucks" and not much character depth (though there was a bit), but I still found it entertaining. I found the organization unique but kind of random.

I don't regret reading it and even enjoyed it. Not something I'd read again, but something I would recommend if you're not looking for something too deep.

Overall:

Easy read. Entertaining. Though the very end of the epilogue irritated me for whatever reason. I suppose I just found it unnecessary. I was, however, ecstatic that the dog came out alright! As always the dog's survival was the most important issue for me.

Once Upon a Twilight says

3.5

Cheryl says

I must admit that I was a sucker for this book. It is like one of those "campy horror movies". Ones that you love to hate but in a good way. There was nothing too scary about the events happening that night during the hunt. In addition, the characters for the most part were your average people. Nothing special or intriguing about them. In fact, there are probably some that you will find yourself cheering hoping that something happens to them.

For as many books that I have read, I really did not have a clue as to who was causing all of the havoc until the reveal. Until then I was just along for the joy ride. Although I must admit that the ending was fine but if I had it my way it probably would have ended differently. If you do anything, follow this one rule..."Pick up a copy of this book".

Lala BooksandLala says

This was fast paced and a can't-put-it-down kind of story, but not overly impressive or memorable. 2.75

A.J. Bauers says

The Rules was a glorious mashup up of 90s teen thriller books a la Christopher Pike and the PS4 game Until Dawn. It's full of murder, mystery, and (as the title demands) rules by which every character lives by.

My favorite part about the book was the multiple POVs Holder and Vigie scattered throughout the prose. As an author, I learned a lot. The authors provided a clever entry point to introduce each character POV by stating one of the character's personal rules (such as Larson's Rule #1: Don't work if you can cheat instead). It's unique enough to make the format memorable, but it isn't so quirky to distract from the tone of the book.

Overall, I enjoyed reading the way I would enjoy a slightly cheesy slasher film. If you appreciate movies like I Know What You Did Last Summer, you'll have a fun time reading The Rules.
