



The Dive From Clausen's Pier

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A suspenseful, richly layered first novel that asks: How much do we owe the people we love?

THE DIVE FROM CLAUSEN'S PIER will speak to all those who have ever thought about leaving when they knew they should stay, anyone who has ever felt trapped, not only by circumstance, but by the strength of their own love, Carrie Bell has lived in Wisconsin all her life. She's had the same best friend, the same good relationship with her mother, the same boyfriend, for as long as anyone can remember. But when her fiancé, Mike is paralyzed by a tragic accident, Carrie has to question everything she thought she knew about herself and about the meaning of home.

Ann Packer has written a morally complex, deeply satisfying novel about the desire to live fully and the conflict between who we want to be to others and who we must be for ourselves. A magnificent debut from a remarkable new talent.

The Dive From Clausen's Pier Details

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Author : Ann Packer

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From Reader Review The Dive From Clausen's Pier for online ebook

Casey says

This book was recommended to me by a friend. She loved it. I hated it.

The plot of this book - and yes, i'll be spoiling it - is that there is this girl who hates her bf, wants to break up with him. He gets hurt showing off for her because he knows she's going to ditch him. She runs away and meets another guy. New guy is somewhat screwed up, but this is where this book divides into a love it or hate it book. She eventually succeeds, while with new guy, but then goes back to home where poor paralyzed ex-bf is. New-bf shows up, but eventually he goes home and she goes back to old-bf, in her old home town, trapped in the life she didn't want in the first place.

In other words: I hated it.

Abby says

2.5/5

I knew nothing about this book going in. It had been gifted to me, so I decided to give it a go. For me, books with "plotless" plots had better be written well in order to work. Unfortunately this just didn't do it for me. Basically Carrie ditches her long-term boyfriend after he becomes a quadriplegic from a dive gone wrong. Carrie then moves to New York in favor of new boyfriend Kilroy. That's it. Nothing else. And the execution was boring AF.

Ashy Khaira says

the book starts off with carrie describing a little of herself and how mike,her sweetheart of 8 years and fiance of 1,sees her or rather describes her.she talks of how their relationship has come to a point where she feels she is wrong for their relationship,no longer falling in love with him or in love with him and how her aloofness and her reluctance to truly stop mike,or inform anyone of the lower water levels at the pier lead to mike breaking snapping his spine,and neck but he survived as a quadreplegic after undergoing operations to try to gain back most of his movements.carrie leaves their hometown in a moment of weakness after she and mike breaks off and moves to new york to be with kilroy,a guy she met at her friends victor's dinner party before realizing towards the end that she truly loves mike and moves back to her hometown to be with him

Kelly says

SPOILERS

This book sucks. It came highly recommended to me by a friend so I gave it a shot. The Midwest setting appealed to me; I live and grew up in Northeast Wisconsin. The appeal ends there. Sure, I felt bad that the boyfriend became paralyzed. I could only imagine what a position that would put the girlfriend in, how one

would become wracked with guilt for wanting to move on and make a better life for herself. To me, her moving to NYC was justifiable and not cold in the least. She had wanted to end the relationship before the accident, it's not like she dumped him over the fact he became paralyzed. I read this quite awhile ago and don't remember much about it other than the fact that I WANTED TO STRANGLE this girl at the end of the book. What a disappointment for her to return to Wisconsin. Boo hiss. I don't think I've hated a character more in all my years of reading. And they made a movie out of this garbage? Probably appeals to any woman who has stayed in a loveless relationship out of guilt, as if that's a gift to the other. Do the guy a favor and move on so he can find someone who LOVES him, not pities him.

Kathy says

While this isn't classic literature, I was touched by the book.

Carrie Bell is a 23 year old woman who is questioning whether Mike, her high school boyfriend turned fiancée, is really the man and the life she wants to commit to. Her decision becomes more complicated and conflict laden after Mike is paralyzed in a diving accident. Would she loyally proceed with the plan to eventually marry Mike and become his cook, nurse, helper, chauffeur, attendant and somehow his wife? Or would she be the kind of person who would willingly walk away and break the heart of a nice guy?

We learn about ourselves in stages: facts first, meanings later. And so it was for Carrie. She made her decision, and wondered afterwards what that decision said about her and what kind of person she was. How much do we owe someone we love? Is it a strength or a weakness to walk away from someone in need? Carrie's choice ultimately wasn't about right or wrong or about defining herself; her task was to define her choice, and to recognize and accept who she was.

I am the wife of a man who became disabled in an accident. Ann Packer is dead on in her portrayal of the painful questions, trials, and decisions that face an individual and family when a random, tragic accident forever changes life into before and after. I know how in an instant life can change forever; it forces you to personally face how you bear up in the face of tragedy and to examine what you thought you knew about your deepest allegiances.

Feather Stolzenbach says

I hated this book with a passion.

From the Publisher

A riveting novel about loyalty and self-knowledge, and the conflict between who we want to be to others and who we must be for ourselves.

Carrie Bell has lived in Wisconsin all her life. She's had the same best friend, the same good relationship with her mother, the same boyfriend, Mike, now her fiancé, for as long as anyone can remember. It's with real surprise she finds that, at age twenty-three, her life has begun to feel suffocating. She longs for a change, an upheaval, for a chance to begin again.

That chance is granted to her, terribly, when Mike is injured in an accident. Now Carrie has to question everything she thought she knew about herself and the meaning of home. She must ask: How much do we owe the people we love? Is it a sign of strength or of weakness to walk away from someone in need?

The Dive from Clausen's Pier reminds us how precarious our lives are and how quickly they can be divided into before and after, whether by random accident or by the force of our own desires. It begins with a disaster that could happen, out of the blue, in anybody's life, and it forces us to ask how we would bear up in the face of tragedy and what we know, or think we know, about our deepest allegiances. Elegantly written and ferociously paced, emotionally nuanced and morally complex, The Dive from Clausen's Pier marks the emergence of a prodigiously gifted new novelist.

Kim says

I'm still haunted by this story. It's about a young couple in their early 20s living in the midwest-- Wisconsin (I think). They've been dating since high school. She's about to break up with him, then he has a horrible diving accident while they're picnicing with friends. He becomes a quadraplegic. Up until this point, everyone including both of their parents have assumed they were going to be married because they've dated for so long. She wanted to break it off with him before the accident, now what should she do? He's a likeable guy and loves her. Still, she's young and needs to get on with her life. I felt so torn because I loved both of these young people. It's well-written and engrossing. She travels to NYC to process what happened, and to find herself. It's a bit suspensful because you don't know if she's going to return to him or not, or if she should.

Michelle Young says

Meghan from my Book Lust class kept talking about how thought-provoking this book was, so when I saw it on the school library shelf, I picked up it during my lunch break. I am compelled to read on!

later

Wow, I finally finished this last night, and feel satisfied at the ending. I was afraid for awhile that I was going to be disappointed, but it seemed realistic to me and there was even a little surprise.

The story posed a moral quandary, described a believable relationship (actually a variety of believable friendships, parental relationships, romantic ones, etc.), and featured lovely writing. This is now one of my favorite books!

Lisa says

Ugh. Wish I had back the time it took out of my life to read this. The worst things about this book: 1. I simply did NOT find the actions, thoughts, and dialogue believable for a young woman of her age. 2. The NYC stuff was beyond ridiculous and not even remotely realistic.

Maybe it would have been better if she'd been the one crippled instead of her boyfriend. She has so many emotional problems including being both a control freak and a giant martyr that I just hated her.

Perrine says

I don't think that I would have stumbled upon this book had my friend not recommended it to me. It is a rich and utterly human story of loss, coming of age and self-discovery. Carrie, the protagonist, is a 23-year old girl who hasn't yet been allowed to spread her wings. When she is considering making a life change, destiny makes it for her. Her boyfriend (now fiance) of 8 years takes a plunge from Clausen's Pier, breaks his neck and becomes a quadriplegic. He cannot move his hands, has no sexual sensitivity and is going through his own sort of depression. She must now struggle between what society says that she must do and her own fears and doubts.

I think that the themes explored in this book are applicable to any living human being. Though we may not have to face this exact scenario, we all have to make difficult decisions in life even when some of those decisions seem to have been already made for us. I was, however, unsatisfied with Carrie's eventual development as a person. I feel that she never fully understood herself as an individual and only understood how she was in relation to a romantic interest. I kept assuming that this would eventually happen, but perhaps it does. We can't expect a full resolution in such a short time span since all of us are always searching for better self-awareness.

Amanda says

Way back in the day, I used to read these terrible teen dramas by Lurlene McDaniel. Someone in the book either had cancer, was dying, or was just killed and I sobbed from the beginning of the book to the end. So I stopped reading those books.

The Dive From Clausen's Pier was a grown-up Lurlene McDaniel' novelette. Well written? Yes. Engaging characters? Yes. An enjoyable read? Not quite. I could decide if I sympathized with the main character or hated her. The pivotal event happens so early in the book (i.e. page 5 or so) that I had no connection to the characters before I saw them "change" due to grave circumstances. One character is purposefully enigmatic, but as hard as it is for the heroine to get to know Kilroy, it is even harder for the reader to connect - or care.

Somehow, I liked this book. It is smoothly written and it was nice to see the heroine take on New York City with wide, naive Midwestern eyes. But while I sympathized with Carrie Bell for the situations she found herself in, it did not seem like her actions were legitimate reactions to the events of her life.

Kate says

Carrie Bell feels the pull of a new life awaiting her outside her Wisconsin hometown. Her relationship with her fiance Mike is boring her, and she wants to see the world and learn who she is. She goes out with Mike on Memorial Day, and he dives headfirst into a shallow lake and is immediately paralyzed. Can Carrie stay? No. But with pressure from all sides, her mother, Mike's parents, their friends in Madison, Carrie feels terrible about deciding to leave and not return home. Still, she moves to NYC with an old acquaintance from high school with whom she strikes up a new relationship and while there, she meets Kilroy, a man from whom she cannot turn away. But unexpectedly, despite her happiness in NY and a new career looming, she finds herself being pulled back to Madison. The book leaves you in genuine suspense as to whether Carrie will abandon Mike for a new life or will she turn her back on her own needs and settle down to do the "right thing". And who is it the "right thing" for?

This was one of those books that I looked at and thought, "I really should read that" and didn't read it because I thought that way. I hate books that I should read. I hate the pressure of the world's expectations

weighing on me as I read a book that it seems everyone else in the world likes. Now, in general, there's a reason why everyone tends to like those books, and it's that they're genuinely good books. This book was no exception. And usually I have a HUGE quibble with people who write about NYC. (see below) But even in this book, the usual pretentiousness of a writer writing about NY disappeared into one great story. I couldn't put the book down. It was great. I was genuinely conflicted as to what Carrie should do. And I was pleased, overall, with the way it came out in the end. I wish I could write as well.

KAOS says

i wanted to like this. i started out liking it but by the time i was wrapped up in it, i realized how trite it was. i grew up near madison and kept trying to find connection to the characters and places. i just kept thinking "why would people like her?" and "who the fuck would be friends with these people?" - everyone was a cliché, or not very detailed. no one talks or acts like these people, especially 23-year-olds. i really like the premise of the book - your fiance is in an accident and now a parapalegic, what do you do? - but carrie, the main character, is really lame and does random things without explanation or care. and all of the sex scenes were written in a really awkward and laughingly weird way. why am i giving it three stars? i finished it, and a lot of the writing is strong, and it wasn't what i expected it to be. when i finished i read a lot of really angry - and funny - reviews on amazon. it wasn't terrible, but it wasn't great.

Eveline Chao says

Reading this I was really impressed at what an undeniably good writer Ann Packer is, but then I really disliked the book itself. It was just sort of dumb. The protagonist kept having all these realizations and experiences and stuff that all just seemed really obvious and banal to me. It was kind of like reading a book about dogs who had no idea what dogs were & had only just discovered them & was going on and one about how amazing dogs were, & has no idea that everyone knows what a dog is, dummy.

Catherine says

UG! I can't put into words my utter disappointment with the main character Carrie. I actually wanted her to come to life so I could bitch slap her. I don't want to divulge too much for I might ruin the ending for those who want to read it (please don't). The story had merit, the writing was good, but the ending was utterly incomprehensible to me. I actually felt trapped as if the main character were making life decisions for me. I felt doomed to a life without personal growth. rrrgg.

Kath Rothschild says

Finishing Ann Packer's *The Dive From Clausen's Pier* is at once an immense relief and an immense loss. The character Kilroy talks about "hard" art (Picasso) and "soft" art (Matisse) and certainly Packer's is the former. The entire book is one long exercise in feeling and memory, in love and in loss. Packer such a wonderful writer, she actually makes you feel what Carrie, her main character, feels, even after the book has been closed. Of course, that's what the best of books do. Any yet, somehow it feels more

difficult to experience this kind of book as a thirty-something. A young woman, in her twenties or even teens, could love this book and let it leave her with a sense of adventure--with the anticipation of life. That's what I imagine I might have felt reading this a decade ago. But now, I'm left with a sense of regret. Is it Carrie's, or is it mine? How amazing an artist is Packer that I have to ask. And, that I still don't know. Nothing can shake the sense that I've experienced greatness, and lost it.

Zeek says

I picked this one up at a yard sale for 50 cents and I'm glad I didn't pay more. Thoroughly depressing, I wanted to quit many times. The problem? The premise and first chapter contained a good enough hook to make me wonder how in the heck Carrie, the main character, was going to handle the situation the author threw at her.

Carrie and Mike had been dating since high school. Now, 5 or so years later, she's realized that her life in small town Wisconsin is suffocating her and is ready to make a break. One problem, on a holiday with friends, Mike takes a dive off a pier into shallow water- and ends up paralyzed.

Should our desires and needs be sacrificed out of obligation to what others think we should do? Is pity a good enough reason when the love isn't there anymore? These are the questions none of us ever hope to have to ponder- but ones Carrie does from the onset of the story.

Through most of the book, part of me was as disgusted with Carrie as her friends were when she took off into the night choosing her wants over her old love's needs. Another part of me wanted her to do it.

But that wasn't what bugged me about the book- in fact the exploration of "What Would You Do in a Similar Situation" is what kept me reading.

My annoyance was in the fact that Packer rambled on and on allowing Carrie to wallow in self-pity so much so you wanted to shake her. She drew Carrie's life in NYC out so long I wanted to throw the book against the wall, because I knew damn well Carrie had to go back and confront the mess she left behind. And even THAT would have been okay with me- if it weren't for the fact Carrie wasn't making any self discoveries while separated from the situation.

True, the author gave Carrie new relationships in NYC, but she didn't really develop them enough to make the book more interesting. Oh Carrie started dating again while there- and the man she chose had so many secrets you wanted to scream- but the author never really gave me the answers as to why to satisfy me either. (I felt like the proverbial donkey being led along by a carrot that will never be attained.)

Carrie's entire time in NYC was just needless filler as far as I'm concerned- filler that could have added so much more to the story if we had gotten inside Carrie's head instead of watching her walk around seemingly ignoring what was really going on.

Carrie eventually does go back to Wisconsin and we do read the ending which could not have ended any other way, however, after being led down so many meandering paths for so long, I didn't really care. I threw the book against the wall anyway.

Kelli says

A story that strikes home because the main character does not do what seems to be the right thing. She is confused, sometimes self-centered, yet struggles to keep her integrity in an overwhelming turn of events. Packer perfectly captures her alienation. This one made me think, and made me feel like I had just heard the story of someone I knew.

Beth says

This book sucks. It had potential - the plot centers around the question of what we owe those we love. The main character is a girl engaged to a man who becomes a paraplegic just after their relationship goes sour. Potential for a good read, right? The problem is that this becomes a novel about a girl trying to become a fashion designer in NY and the paraplegic boyfriend is left in the dust after all of 90 pages. Then it's all about fashion, and BAD fashion at that. The author lost me when she described this up-and-coming young woman as finding a man's silver earring sexy (which would never happen), and then described her slowly unbuttoning her love interest's "thick denim shirt." Eww! This is a novel about NY fashion that was clearly written by an author who knows nothing about the topic. The characters are shallow, obvious, and undeveloped. I can't bring myself to waste any more time on it, so at page 300, I quit. Screw you, Ann Packer.

Lo says

I actually did not enjoy this book, and it definitely leaves a very bitter taste's in the mouth after you finish.

The premise is that our heroine (hyperbole) Carrie Bell wants out of an 8 year relationship with her nearly perfect high school sweet heart Mike. However, Mike, in an attempt to impress her, paralyzes himself for life and leaves Carrie in a difficult position. (spoiler) Running away from the situation, Carrie flees to New York City (from Madison, WI) and begins a new relationship with someone she feels a deeper emotional and intellectual connection with. After pursuing her dreams and falling in love, she gets sucked back into the blackhole of Madison and abandons everyone who loves and has helped her in New York in favor of "trying to make things right" in WI.

This was just an immensely frustrating plot line. When Carrie first moves to New York, you get excited for her - she has finally escaped her social confines, emerging from her chrysalis as a strong and beautiful butterfly ready to take on New York. You can feel the hope Ann Packer puts into the pages - Carrie seems so happy and at peace (mostly) with her life in New York. Yet, in the last 100 pages when Carrie decides to return to Madison to try to patch up a devastated friendship and tease Mike more, it is almost heart breaking. You watch this girl simply throw her life away because, for lack of better word, she is weak. She NEVER stands up for herself, and she simply lets other people guilt trip and manipulate her into conforming to her will. She ends up unhappy at the end with no best friend (even though they are speaking, they will never be able to regain what they had), no boyfriend, no money, no job, no peace of mind, and lots of regrets.

Carrie Bell epitomizes the woman I hope never to become.

This book does have its moments of clarity - Packer captures the heartbreak and overwhelming sense of insecurity of a girl released from a confining and doomed relationship. For someone just coming out of a

relationship that they knew was not right, the first 2/3 of this book are empathetic and insightful and may offer comfort. However, the last 1/3 of the book is so morbidly depressing and weak that I would NOT recommend this to someone looking for hope after a long relationship.

I really wouldn't recommend this book to anyone. People who have never been in a long term relationship will find this book to be trivial and nonsensical, people in relationships will find it depressing, and people out of relationships will find it frustrating. The only reason this book received a 2 star was because Ann Packer's writing style is captivating and well done. However, she deserves a sharp reprimand for such an unrealistic and incongruous ending.
