



Defy the Stars

Stephanie Parent

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Julia Cape: A dedicated classical piano student just trying to get through her last semester of high school while waiting to hear from music conservatories.

Reed MacAllister: A slacker more likely to be found by the stoners' tree than in class.

Julia and Reed might have graduated high school without ever speaking to each other...until, during a class discussion of Romeo and Juliet, Julia scoffs at the play's theme of love at first sight, and Reed responds by arguing that feelings don't always have to make sense. Julia tries to shake off Reed's comment and forget about this boy who hangs with the stoner crowd—and who happens to have breathtaking blue eyes—but fate seems to bring the two together again and again. After they share an impulsive, passionate kiss, neither one can deny the chemistry between them. Yet as Julia gets closer to Reed, she also finds herself drawn into his dark world of drugs and violence. Then a horrific tragedy forces Julia's and Reed's families even farther apart...and Julia must decide whether she's willing to give up everything for love.

Defy the Stars is written in an edgy free-verse style that will appeal to fans of Ellen Hopkins and Lisa Schroeder; however, the writing is accessible enough to speak to non-verse fans as well. The novel's combination of steamy romance and raw emotion will appeal to fans of Gayle Forman, Simone Elkeles, Jennifer Echols, and Tammara Webber. With a story, language and form that both pay homage to and subvert Shakespeare's play, Defy the Stars is much more than just another Romeo and Juliet story.

Defy the Stars Details

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From Reader Review Defy the Stars for online ebook

Janna Mashburn says

These violent delights have violent ends
And in their triumph die, like fire and powder,
Which as they kiss consume.

Heres much to do with that, but more with love.-Shakespeare

Julia and Reed might have graduated high school without ever speaking to each other...until, during a class discussion of Romeo and Juliet, Julia scoffs at the play's theme of love at first sight, and Reed responds by arguing that feelings don't always have to make sense.

"I don't know if it's about love, so much, as fate. Something bigger than Romeo and Juliet, something greater than any two people, pulled them to each other, entwined their lives like...like a knot that no one could untangle. They could no more change what happened than...than stop a star from falling."-Reed

Julia is a pianist studying her whole life, this is her talent, dream and passion. I could relate to Julia's character in some ways, as she was very passionate in everything she did. She loved like she played piano, full of emotion and passion, her emotions taking over. Reed was hard to relate to, he was a troubled teen who seemed to have lost his way. He came from a troubled home, he's the guitar playing, bad boy constantly fighting an internal struggle with the pressures of drugs and violence. This story feels real, the characters relatable and it does not hold back when it comes to young love and the pressures of being a teenager. These starcrossed lovers shared a passion for music, they were not willing to fight fate and they believed that true love would prevail.

This beautiful and lyrically written story is written in verse, and the chapters are a timeline of the story which I thought was brilliant. The minute I started this book, I knew I was not putting it down. This story was REAL and RAW and evoked every emotion I have ever felt about love, life, death and hope right to the surface. It reminded me of that blissful yet painful first love that is so intense, nothing can change it or take it away. Its a love you are willing to fight for, give up for, change for and sometimes die for. My heart bled for Julia and Reed and when I was finished I breathed, dreamt and ached over ths story. I still do...

"For never was a story of more woe..."

Erika says

Interview with Stephanie Parent: <http://oneadayya.blogspot.ca/2012/09/...>

Giveaway and full review: <http://oneadayya.blogspot.ca/2012/09/...>

My thoughts:

If you skipped over the summary (which I hope you didn't) and jumped right into my thoughts here, let me

say this: *Defy the Stars* is not only a novel-in-verse but also a retelling of William Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*. Not only that, but I've been secretly on the lookout for a self-published novel-in-verse for kindle that don't cost an arm and a leg (there are few and far between verse novels available for kindle). I couldn't pass up this opportunity. I knew I had to give it a try.

At first of the book seemed to fly by. I loved the role of music in the novel and how different Julia seemed from the original *Juliet*. Also, it was really fun seeing all the new characters pop up and trying to place them in the original story. This is though, a story that can stand apart from it's original. It's different yet the inspiration is clearly there and it started to take on a shape of it's own that made me slow down and look more closely at all the little details. That level of retelling is exactly what I was looking for.

In the end *Defy the Stars* was a very different book than I expected, sometimes giving me more than I hoped for and other times surprising me in ways I wasn't sure sat well with me. For instance, the drug use. I don't mind reading about all sorts of gritty things but I found the reasons for Reed's and Julia's exploration of drugs disturbing. Mainly that was because it seemed too real for me. I could see all too easy how Reed would find solace in drugs and Julia find they enhance her all too controlled life. I wanted something much better for them. However, after some consideration and time away from the book, I find this book growing on me. I keep coming back to it and looking at it from different angles, finding new things surprising me every time I think about it. Now I think this is a beautiful retelling of a tragic story. It isn't less tragic but it has a voice of it's own that has really made me think and digest things differently.

On a side note: The verse format worked really well for the kindle. It's nicely done and not hard to read at all which I was worried about.

**As reviewed on One A Day Y.A.

Henrietta says

Because this story contains mature language and themes, including drug use, I was a little apprehensive at first. I didn't want to prematurely judge the characters but I was afraid I would feel drown in the darker, brooding mood that overshadowed the fragile, sweet love of two teenagers.

From the blurb, it's already hinted that Reed's upbringing is very different from Julia's. Even though they go to the same high school, they associate themselves with different crowds. Reed is often seen with those who smoke and take drugs. Julia is usually found running to the practice room playing the piano whenever she has a spare moment. But are they really two different types of people?

I like that for the most part, Reed and Julia are trying their best to hang onto hope and sanity. What they have is fragile. The families are hostile to one another. The pressure is suffocating, making them both question about their existence, their sense of self-worthiness. I feel so sad watching them struggle with what they can hang onto, and when they feel they have nothing left to treasure, it's just the epitome of tragic woe.

To be honest, I never like *Romeo and Juliet*. I never feel much of a connection with the characters and I find the family hostility pointless. Reading *Defy the Stars*, however, helps me see the tragic love story in new light. The male protagonist may be weak and melodramatic but he does have a sweet friendly nature that is charming and attractive. In *Defy the Stars*, Reed is vulnerable. He thinks lowly of himself. Making poor decisions definitely wouldn't save him from troubles but when he is thoughtful, he is so... lovable,

considerate and swoon-worthy! I can't help but feel sad and achy for all the crap he has to endure.

What can I say about Julia? When she is rational, she organizes her routine with plans and charts. In moments when she yearns for freedom, she goes a little wild, takes risk and lets her emotions take over. I personally find the essence of the third movement of Beethoven's Moonlight Sonata really captures the nasty ups and downs of Julia's emotional ride. You have to read the story to see what I mean but if you'd like to hear what the third movement sounds like, check out this video and if you'd like to hear all three movements of the sonata, click here.

Even though tragedy is not my usual cup of tea, I enjoyed reading the story and felt deeply moved by the ending. *Defy the Stars* is gripping, touching and heartbreaking. With an ending that is powerful and emotional, I doubt I'll forget this story any time soon.

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This review was originally posted on my blog.

A copy of the book was provided by author for review purposes.

Andrea says

"...what could I have done?
Could I have changed this song, altered
this key? Or was this tragedy
already written, black notes
of music on the page,
a story in the stars? "

With it's stunning verse narrative and star-crossed lovers, *Defy the Stars* is a modern day Romeo and Juliet that will steal your heart.

I love books written in verse. I suppose I always have, but I didn't consciously realize that until I read *Love and Leftovers* late last year. So when the author asked me to review *Defy the Stars*, and mentioned it was written in free verse, I knew I had to read her story.

Defy the Stars was so stunning, so beautiful, that I'm at a loss here. I always take notes while reading books for review, but I couldn't bear to stop and write down my thoughts. The fact that I didn't stop tells you how deeply I was drawn into Reed and Julia's story. I didn't want to interrupt the flow of the story. The way the author staggered the lines set up such a dramatic effect. At times, a simple word, precisely placed on the page, had the effect of a bomb dropping on my heart.

Much like their inspiration, Reed and Julia are the ultimate star-crossed couple. Like Romeo and Juliet, familial ties conspire against them. Julia is a girl of privilege, content, but not quite happy. Her parents want the best for her, and are sometimes misguided in their attempts to lead Julia to what they deem best for her. But one crazy night, Julia gets to know the real Reed, not the boy who gets high, but the boy who is sensitive, kind, who loves to play guitar. He's a boy who has everything going against him: no parents, a drug dealing brother, a penchant for being numbed by drugs himself. Everything about them screams "wrong for each other". But the closer they become, they harder they fall for one another. Fate seems determined to bring the two together, altering their destinies forever.

From it's dark prologue through the stunning conclusion, *Defy the Stars* is a story that hit me so, so hard. I read with such an impending sense of doom, yet remained hopeful throughout. I was left sobbing, heart-

broken. But ultimately, I'm happy I read Defy the Stars. Not many books can inspire such an emotional response. If you're a fan of stories written in verse, stories with characters you will love and cry for, a story that will hit you square in the heart, then I can't recommend Defy the Stars highly enough.

karen says

Romeo and Juliet: Love Story or Cautionary Tale?

this is the question this book conveniently asks in the middle of the narrative, giving me the perfect jumping-off point for my review.

because this is a retelling of romeo and juliet, with meth. in verse.

thought i should get that part out of the way right off the bat. because, yes, i have bemoaned to book-in-verse format time and time and time again, because i think that usually, it doesn't really do the book any favors; it just looks like a buncha sentences broken up unnecessarily to make the story longer. and i am also not a romance-reader, although i have done my explorations in my two romance/erotica book clubs. but that is simply for the sake of broadening myself so i know what's out there. but i was kind of charmed by this author's comment on one of my threads that i decided to take the risk. you know, to see what's out there.

and even though i know for sure i am not the ideal reader for this, i'm glad i gave it a shot, because i did like it, despite still maintaining that books do not need to be written in verse.

so back to the cautionary tale. yeah, romeo and juliet. the quintessential love story of two crazy kids who fall in love after knowing each other for about an hour and die tragically because they can never be together...

i mean, shakespeare pretties it up and makes you sympathize with the lovers because he could do that - he's shakespeare. but it's a waste, right? a teenage infatuation that never had the chance to go the way of most teenage infatuations: the screaming matches in the hallways, the drunken late-night gifts left on doorsteps after driving over the lawn and totally ruining it, the revenge hook-ups, the burning of photographs... teen love is a rite of passage that (hopefully) gets all the drama out of the system in order to form more meaningful attachments later in life, and killing yourself over some teen-love is a total cop-out.

but to return to the book. this is only a sortof retelling. there are the lovers from different worlds, the parental disapproval (which, considering the Thing That Happens in this book, is totally understandable), murrnderrrr, "montag street", and an unhappy resolution. which is all i will say about that.

but the meth element adds another dimension (why you no write about meth, shakespeare??) it brings up the theme of love-as-addiction, and whether a powerful infatuation can be as destructive as substance abuse.

which, yeah, it pretty much can.

and her characters are sympathetic, too: julia is a talented pianist in her huge home with well-meaning but distracted parents and reed is a stoner being raised by his older brother, who cooks meth to pay the bills. worlds collide.

their connection is forged through music. reed plays guitar, writes his own songs, he is the bad boy in a leather jacket who has a secret tenderness that attracts julia. of course, there is familial disapproval on both sides, and their love is thwarted on all sides, until in true shakespearean fashion, through a series of decisions and misunderstandings and treachery, things get dark.

and it is sad and touching and realistic. and, lord, does the verse just fly. this is a very fast read. that is one good thing about the verse-format. you can feel like a reading-machine!

and so i wanted to leave you with a bunch of cautionary photos of meth and its aftermath, but the pictures i found were too horrifying even for me, and i couldn't deal with posting them on this review.

[image error]

draw your own conclusions.

Alexis says

I had little to no expectations going into this book. I had received a review request, and saw that the book was in verse. I'm a huge fan of verse novels, so I thought I would give this a try.

I loved it. It consumed me for two days. I couldn't stand putting it down, because I was so into the characters and plot of this novel. I play the piano, so I especially loved all the musicalness that Stephanie injected the verse with. If you don't know anything about music, I'm sure you could still enjoy this book, but some of the jargon may go over your head. But even if you've never even played Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star, you should give this book a read.

I can see myself in Julia. Though she makes choices throughout this novel that I would question myself, I can still relate to her because she seems so real to me. The way her feeling and emotions were described in this book make perfect sense.

Reed: the kind of guy that most parents would cringe at seeing on the arm of their daughter. He definitely plays the bad boy well, but he avoids falling into a lot of shallow stereotypes by having an amazing back-story, and backbone for that matter. I love male leads who can stand on their own two feet and make decisions. His story is super tragic. :(

The plot was great, and though I thought that maybe it dragged a tiny bit right before the climax, I was too in love with the characters to care. For being a relatively unknown book, the depth of the characters really surprised me.

I knew from the beginning that this book was a retelling of Romeo and Juliet, but I still hoped somewhere in my heart that there would be a happy ending. I knew that I couldn't have one, and I'm actually glad there wasn't one. I don't want to give anything away, but the ending was bitter sweet, and perfect.

I really recommend this book to, well, anyone. Please give this a read if you have an ereader! You can find it on Amazon. :)

Maria Stanica says

Hey, you guys! So, for the first time ever an author contacted me and asked me to review her book. I, of course, was super excited and said yes! I was even more excited to learn that it was an "edgy contemporary Romeo and Juliet retelling in verse." I love books like that (Hi, Prom and Prejudice). Stephanie Parent is an amazingly kind lady and I'm sure that her book is going to get super popular in the near future. (By the way, I will be posting the Amazon link for her book at the end of this post. It's only available in Kindle at the moment.) She got the cover done with a zero dollar budget which is so impressive! Now, please enjoy a review of Defy the Stars by Stephanie Parent.

Summary:

"Julia Cape: A dedicated classical piano student just trying to get through her last semester of high school while waiting to hear from music conservatories.

Reed MacAllister: A slacker more likely to be found by the stoners' tree than in class.

Julia and Reed might have graduated high school without ever speaking to each other...until, during a class discussion of Romeo and Juliet, Julia scoffs at the play's theme of love at first sight, and Reed responds by arguing that feelings don't always have to make sense. Julia tries to shake off Reed's comment and forget about this boy who hangs with the stoner crowd—and who happens to have breathtaking blue eyes—but fate seems to bring the two together again and again. After they share an impulsive, passionate kiss, neither one can deny the chemistry between them. Yet as Julia gets closer to Reed, she also finds herself drawn into his dark world of drugs and violence.

Then a horrific tragedy forces Julia's and Reed's families even farther apart...and Julia must decide whether she's willing to give up everything for love.

Defy the Stars is written in an edgy free-verse style that will appeal to fans of Ellen Hopkins and Lisa Schroeder; however, the writing is accessible enough to speak to non-verse fans as well. The novel's combination of steamy romance and raw emotion will appeal to fans of Gayle Forman, Simone Elkeles, Jennifer Echols, and Tammara Webber. With a plot, language and form that both pay homage to and subvert Shakespeare's play, Defy the Stars is much more than just another Romeo and Juliet story.

Please note that this novel contains mature language and themes, including drug use."

Review:

Firstly, I know what you all are thinking: "I thought she was uncomfortable reading books about drugs... A book that has to do with drugs?" Let me tell you: the author is NOT condoning drug use in this book. Yes, it IS a major part of the story, but drugs ruin the characters' lives - the main character experiments with it, but decides to stop taking it before she gets addicted.

And about being uncomfortable with drugs, aren't a lot of people? I don't like drugs and I don't approve of them in the slightest, but as a teenager I know that it is a major influence in a lot of people's lives. If I understand why authors include drug use in a book and it makes sense, it doesn't take away from the book, in my opinion. I hope that cleared things up.

I loved the way this book was written - the verse, I mean. It was so... cool, for lack of a better word. I had never read a book like that before and it made everything so much more dramatic and interesting.

The way she wrote it was fantastic - I legitimately cried at the end. I have read Romeo and Juliet by William Shakespeare several times (I love it), and although I knew how it would ultimately end, it was really interesting to see the way she had everything happen. It was awesome how she used drugs as the poison.

I loved how some of the characters had names that began with the letter of the name of the Shakespeare character they were "portraying": Julia - Juliet, Reed - Romeo, Perry - Paris, etc...

I loved the characters except Perry, but I don't think anyone was supposed to like Perry.

One complaint - I wish Perry had gotten stabbed. I'm not one to be like, "GO VIOLENCE!", but I don't mind battle scenes and all that stuff. However, Perry made me so angry, I wanted him to get stabbed by one of those big powerful guys. He made my skin crawl, but I think he was supposed to.

I also really liked Julia and Reed's relationship. They were just so good together. The only time I was annoyed is when Reed gave Julia drugs. That was not good (I understand why it happened, I was only mad at the character).

Another cool thing was Julia and her piano. I play the piano, and her talent made me wish that I could play as well as her. It was just so cool to see how she connected with piano and how that difficult piece of music was only difficult until she went through the type of pain that the music was portraying. It was beautiful, really.

In all, I give it five stars. I read it in a few hours (a few days ago) because I was super into it. I recommend this book, but please do remember the warning in the summary/blurb thingie.

Please check out my blog post where I post this exact same review - and I include an excerpt of the book and an interview with the author! Hope you enjoyed:
<http://princessofpages.blogspot.com/2...>

Pooja (On books!) says

Review (originally posted on my blog) + Giveaway of the book: <http://aandhowareyou.blogspot.in/2012...>

Julia and Reed.

Modern-day versions of Romeo and Juliet.

This should be easy, you might think. Their fates are locked the minute their eyes meet and are made to read the parts of Romeo and Juliet in English class.

I felt uneasy as I started reading Defy The Stars, the opening verses setting the tempo to a relationship that was doomed from the start. Julia, after all, is well-off while Reed is from the wrong drug-infested side of town. And we all know how Romeo and Juliet ends.

What was the point, then of falling in love with these characters?

And yet, when Julia dismissed the conception of love at first sight and Reed quietly justifies it, I realised that Defy The Stars was a modern adaptation in the truest sense. It was multi-layered and more intense than I'd ever expected it to be.

"I see what Julia's saying," he starts, "but the way Shakespeare writes... Just 'cause a feeling doesn't make sense, doesn't mean it's not right, you know?"

Julia is devoted to playing the piano. She hopes to get into a prestigious music conservatory. Reed is a stoner and branded a slacker whose life will amount to nothing.

When their paths cross... they instantaneously forget that a life when they got by without really knowing each other even existed.

Their lives are hopelessly intertwined, especially when tragedy strikes and Julia's parents and Reed's brother will not rest until they cut ties with the other.

It's devastating. It crushes them more than they ever thought it would.

This is the part when I felt swayed by the rhythm... carried away by the remorse and arousal and urgency and enamored with their story. This is the part when Defy the Stars felt more than just another Romeo and Juliet adaptation and I was swept away by the complexity of the tale and the parallels drawn from the classic.

The dirty drug world, the hauntingly beautiful piano pieces played by Julia and the intensity of Reed's gaze... their histories, their relationship outside each other and the melodies which soar and then are tainted by melancholy. Reed's guitar riffs, the hopelessness and the urgency to overcome it...

The free-verse brought each and every aspect of this book alive until I could feel myself in Julia's skin, struggling to hit the right note and make sense of her relationship with Reed. Her fingers ran across the keys, transcending technique until each note was entrenched with feeling. I felt her desperation to make their relationship work against all odds as her heart overpowered her mind.

And the ending truly blew me away... In my opinion, it couldn't have been more true to how things would've panned out for Romeo and Juliet in the current decade. It was utterly devastating yet poignant. And unlike the classic, I could come to terms with it.

Defy the Stars is an indie gem. I urge you to give it a try, especially if you're fond of modern-day adaptations. I was moved by this beautifully written tale and blown away by how well developed and multi-layered the characters were. I felt one with the pace of the story and when it ended, I couldn't stop myself from rating it on Goodreads right away; the remnants of Julia's last actions still lingering in my mind.

Magen Corrie says

"I don't know if it's about love, so much, as fate. Something bigger than Romeo and Juliet, something greater than any two people, pulled them to each other, entwined their lives like...like a knot that no one could untangle. They could no more change what happened than...than stop a star from falling.-Reed"

This book was beyond what I thought it would be.
It ensnared me, held me captive from first sentence to the last page.
I had no chance to escape once I read the first word.
Defy the Stars is stunningly written and beautifully told.
It's a swirl of emotions.
Depth of beauty and danger.
Dark and alluring.

I would first like to thank Stephanie Parent for allowing me to read this book.
Thank you!

This is a book, written in verse style. Something I am not used to reading.
I have, however, read books by Ellen Hopkins, so the writing style wasn't all that new to me.
But, writing a review was a bit tough.

Julia Cape, a straight lace girl, who's just trying to finish high school and leave her town behind so she can play.
Play her piano that is, the only thing in her life she truly and wholeheartedly loves.
Every day, in and out, she plays, thinking of nothing much, otherwise.
School, piano, friends and family.
That's Julia's world.

That all chances when she has a discussion on Romeo & Juliet with the stoner, Reed MacAllister, where she 'scoffs' love at first sight, and Reed tries to defend the classic love story.
With just that one discussion, Julia just can't seem to keep that dark and mysterious stoner, Reed, out of her head.

Then, with one encounter after another, these two find a different meaning in love at first.
Julia finds hope and love, where she that there was none.
Reed enters her life so un-expectantly, changing so many things for her.
And there begins their story of star crossed lovers.

With a bang and swift movement, her hands poised over the keys, she tells her story. With the sounds of piano chords.

You are rushed on a symphony of verses and words.
You enter a world that is raw and heartbreaking.
The emotions run deep and consume you.

"Even when we're not together, I still taste him on my lips, a collision of sweetness and dark like a night sky scattered with stars."

From first words Julia and Reed collide.
First kiss they are enraptured with each other.
From there, they can't escape the grip they have.
They can't fight fate.

Throughout the story, I could feel the dark and encouraging emotions seeping off this page.
And I thoroughly enjoyed it.
It made me, in a way, be consumed in this world that Parent created.
The flow of the story was smooth, and the plot was beautifully told.
Parent kept the pace of the book nice, I was never lost nor did it feel rushed.
Music plays a heavy theme in the book and the writing style reminded me of how music flows.
It was captivating.

Julia and Reed start off with a complicated relationship, not knowing each other, to not liking each other, complete with misunderstandings and miscommunication.
Then fate seems to take the wheel and with a stirring of actions,
Reed and Julia set forth on a path of love, self-discovery, tragedy and hope.

The characters felt somewhat real and strong.

They each had flaws, weaknesses that were exposed in the book.

I got to know Julia on a personal level; however, I felt I didn't get to really know Reed that well. We only get to see certain sides of him, and I felt there was just so much more to learn about him.

They truly are the complete opposite of each other.

The only thing I felt was missing, was that we didn't get to know the characters but on certain levels.

Parent tells a story of faith, love darkness, hope, tragedy and discover.

It was a heartbreaking and a consuming read.

Raw, dark and twisted, yet hopeful, fresh and inspiring.

I don't think I have ever cried so hard over a book...

This book held me captive, and with a swirl of emotions, I couldn't put it down.

Defy the Stars is about a tragic love story, so if you need a stunning heartwarming and tear-jerking read. I highly recommend this book!

Check out the Review on my blog

:)

Corrie the book, crazed girl

Crystal says

What starts out as a simple love story between two people from two different worlds, turns out to be so much more complicated and tragic that my heart still hurts.

Julia simply put is your average student just trying to survive high school and eventually go off to college where she can practice her music. She feels like no one understands her even her parents and she knows that life will be so much better when she can just be around other music people like herself. With pressure from her friends, she decides to go out on a date with Perry, the guy her parents desperately want her to be with. Well when things don't go as planned and Mr.Perry gets a little to grabby she runs away and in the process runs smack dab into Reed, the guy she never knew she wanted until he looked at her with his bright blue eyes. Reed is everything her parents don't want for her, guy from the wrong side of the tracks, brother possibly into illegal stuff, and just no hope for a future. Julia knows Reed isn't perfect, but she loves him anyway and knows in her heart that she can save this boy from himself.

What an emotional story. I think Stephanie Parent did an amazing job at showing that not all teenage love is perfect. What Julia and Reed go through is totally heartbreaking. It was real and tragic and just so moving. I really appreciate the author taking her time with this book, I felt like having it in verse definitely helped pace things so we only get the most important parts of the story. I loved getting to know these two characters flaws and all. I only wish that a particular character would have listened and waited. I know that is cryptic but I can't say anymore as it will give too much away.

A great debut from what I hope is a long career for Ms.Parent. I will definitely be on the look out for her next novel.

This review and more can be found here:

Sarah says

I'm going to say this straight up: I totally missed that this is a cautionary tale about drug abuse until I was about a quarter into the book. If I had known this, I probably would not have read it, because I don't care for novels about drug abuse.

While this is a verse novel, and I love verse novels, *Defy the Stars* is largely more of a fractured prose-style than a more structured verse novel like, say, *Love and Leftovers*. I tend to prefer the later, so again, my personal preferences are a knock against this one. Finally, this is a very plot heavy novel, which is light on the character development and I prefer character-driven stories when it comes to realistic fiction.

I'm going to think on this some more and probably review it on CEFS, but I had a hard time with some of the main character's choices in terms of understanding why she made choices and why she loved troubled boy Reed so much.

The highlight for me was definitely the sections about Julia and her (this is a weird word, I know) relationship with the piano. Those passages just bring the music and her struggles with and passion for to life.

I do think Ellen Hopkins fans will like this book, especially since it doesn't shy away from the realities of drug abuse and why and how people get swallowed into that life. The blurb also recommends it for Lisa Schroeder fans, but I actually think that this novel has little in common with Lisa's verse novels. Thematically and tonally they're very different.

I also think that fans of super-dramatic novels like *Slammed* that are so popular right now will also like *Defy the Stars*.

Eunice says

3.5 stars

I was never a fan of *Romeo and Juliet* but when it was said that this book is some sort of a retelling of the said famous romance novel I was curious as how the author will pull it off. Well, actually it was more like I wanted to see a different ending, something that isn't really tragic or well, stupid because I really resent the ending of the original novel. Thankfully, I think the author did a very good job in portraying the story of Reed and Julia as the modern *Romeo and Juliet* and although the ending wasn't exactly what I had hoped for it was I guess, the best that could have come for a retelling of a tragic love story.

Julia and Reed comes from complete opposite world. The rich and the poor, the good and the bad, the responsible and the reckless. That isn't exactly a new setting to us but despite that it wasn't really hard to be swept and curious with the story of these two. Julia is a character that is easy to relate with and understand. Her emotions and feelings are very well voiced out making it even easier for us to understand her better. She did a lot of mistakes and wrong decisions but she's unmistakably a compassionate and strong person.

Reed is a character I'm very torn with. Not that he isn't likable but he was a character that I can't seem to have a firm grasp at. I saw the good in him, the vulnerable side, the reasons behind the addiction, his genuine

intentions and I understand him, I really did and I did grow to care for him. Yet, despite all that it seems that he keeps on slipping away as the story goes on. It was sad and disheartening but I feel like the author purposely wrote his character that way.

The romance between the two was sweet and lovely. I love how the two met and how their feeling for each other developed, how they admitted it and how they fell into each other and didn't seem to care what people say about them. However, some part of me felt like it was lacking a bit of intensity, to completely convince the readers that they were indeed utterly, madly in love without words saying it. It might have made the ending even more compelling and powerful.

Nonetheless, Defy the Stars is lovely and heartwarming read although it ended still pretty tragic (not as much as the original Romeo and Juliet though) but the ending, for some reason I find encouraging. I was actually satisfied with it and it showed what should have been the right choice for the ending of a tragic love story.

Thank you YA Bound and Stephanie Parent for the review copy of this book.

This review is also posted at Book Overdose

Caro [The Book Rogue] says

This was.. wow, a journey as romantic as it was poetic! The writing style had me in knots and pieces, from the beginning almost to the end. It had such rhythm that it developed... a force, almost like it was its own being. Maybe it's the poetic structure, or all the musical terms and expressions, or the both of them combined. What a great way to do a Shakespeare adaptation! And just like a musical piece, it had its highs and lows, so it was possible to stop and put it down when it became too much. It was simply amazing.

The story with its characters was just as good. There wasn't exactly that much to discover, but it was good in its simplicity. It wasn't something you had to stop and think about, to figure it out for yourself before you could put it into context with the characters, so it made you able to focus more on the characters and feelings. Okay, I can't imagine a real life story being more complicated than a paranormal or dystopian story, but I still appreciate the down-to-earth reality flash it gives me in between all the craziness I dive into. Plus, it kinda reminds you that life in itself can be cruel and tragic enough without wishing for paranormal and outer-space things to happen.

Juliet as a sheltered high society lady with her own stubborn mind was perfectly reborn in Julia; and Romeo as the loyal, troubled spirit with a drug problem was updated in Reed with a rough background instead of a (at least half-way) steady home. Yet, it was clear he wasn't anything like his brother Cary, who I'd say was both Mercutio and Tybalt put into one. I know it sounds crazy to merge those two, to even think they could fit together into one person, but that's what it feels like -- to me, anyway.

Plotwise, as a remake of Romeo and Juliet, Defy the Stars was... very good. Not totally outstanding, but powerfully written, especially on the emotional level. However, since it was so emotionally charged, I was a little disappointed by the ending. Of course totally I approve of it from the logical and psychological point, and I admit it was an interesting turn of events, but it just ruined the R+J drama ending.

Btw, [careful, spoiler ahead!!!] I don't believe Reed did this to himself, but that those goons his brother owed got to him because he picked that stupid alley, and of course they'd make it look like suicide! He was perfectly fine before, so why should he suddenly do something like that? Not 'coz of that stupid message Perry sent from Julia's phone, you can't believe that, Reed wasn't that stupid. Grr. I guess I'll be angry about

this for a little while longer...

Area Scan: Style: 5/5 -- Plot: 5/5 -- Characters: 3.5/5 -- Suspense: 3/5 -- Romance: 4/5 -- Drama: 5/5 -- Humor: 3/5

Michelle (In Libris Veritas) says

I received this from the author in exchange for an honest review.

Oh wow...just...wow. This put me in a predicament once I finished it. I wanted to rave about it and share it with people, but it left me utterly speechless and I had no clue how to even start. Luckily after a some deep breathing and some reflection I think I can handle it.

Defy the Stars is not something I typically read on multiple accounts, one it's contemporary which is usually a no go because reality fiction tends to be too 'real' and two it's written in verse. Well neither of those held me back from enjoying this at all, in fact I read it in about 7 hours (only because I had to take food breaks). This was addicting, pun slightly intended in this case. The verse is great, and though I'm sure I'm still not quite getting the whole idea behind verse novels I really enjoy how it's set up and how it flows. I love when the words are spaced a part different and when they zig zag across the pages. It really gives the emotion a visual kind of presence in the book. The book is set up in months as opposed to traditional chapters and I think that's fantastic, it gives you a better sense of time when it comes to the events and how Julia changes over the course of the book. The story itself is...raw and emotional, and it had my heart aching. There is just so much and it was tugging me back and forth on how I felt about it, much like Julia herself. The writing is exceptional and I can really tell that the author enjoys music because parts of this are practically lyrical in nature.

When it comes to Romeo and Juliet I usually have the rare opinion, I love it but I have never seen it has romantic. It was just tragic to me, on my bad days I see it as just too teenagers who didn't think things out. I mention this because Julia herself mentions it in the novel, we shared the same opinion. I suppose when I read this I kind of expected the same emotions but I was so surprised to find myself hoping against all reason they would find a way to work things out and be together. Logic and reason were utterly tossed aside for Julia and Reed. Julia is a great character, she's structured and organized and she has the world ahead of her. Music is her life and because of her passion I could practically hear the music she would play. And then there is Reed, who is so different. His life is far from ideal, he doesn't have money and drugs are no stranger...but for some reason I really liked him. He isn't a bad guy, though his choices are far from good...he's redeemable. I can't even describe how odd that feels to me, I normally would never see a person this way especially not after the crap he takes, but he truly broke my heart. Their relationship is complicated to say the least and it both lifts them up and drags them down. There were times when all I saw was how much she was enjoying her life and how happy she truly was, but then there would be a major snag and my mind would be screaming for her to get away from the situation. Julia's heart is so open when it comes to Reed and it really puts her at risk, and I think Reed needed that in a way. He really has something to look forward to but it made him more vulnerable, and I think it just brought things down on him harder. The ending wasn't what I was expecting and I'm glad, even though this book left me kind of shattered in a way.

I could go on and on about this book at this point, and even though I've taken the time to write out my thoughts I'm still saying wow. I completely recommend this one to pretty much anyone who will give verse novels and contemporary a try. It's worth the time and the money I think.

Shane says

My musical interest is unlimited, and any story that has music in the mix is bound to get my attention. Defy the Stars stands on its own as one of the most exhilarating, thought-provoking, and fascinating story portraying the life of a young girl coming into her own and deciphering what it truly is she wants in life.

What's so wonderful about Stephanie's writing, other than the fact that the story's written in verse, is how instead of chapters things are taking place throughout the course of months. I think that's a cool way of showing growth in the main character's life over the particular period of time leading up to her graduation, as well as how her relationships fair. Whether its with her friends, family, and Reed.

Reed and Julia together is beautiful but somewhat dangerous. His situation is not to be taken lightly. Reed isn't a bad guy, in my opinion, its just the stuff around him that's bad. I think music is what connected the two on another level, aside from their strong chemistry.

Julia is an interesting character. I loved how playing the piano was something she decided to do on her own as oppose to being pressured into it by her parents. Though, she does seem pressured in other ways, whether its living up to their expectations of excelling, or establishing a relationship with someone they deem as respectable, focused, and up to their liking. Julia is a teen so of course her way of discerning certain things will leave you with questionable expressions, but nonetheless, her ability to rise above all else is quite remarkable.

So, what else can I say about this novel? The setting is brilliant, the plot is far from generic, the characters are relatable. Stephanie Parent offers an interesting view on what happens with teens in society, no matter their background, If you're up for a rather realistic read then this is a story for you.
