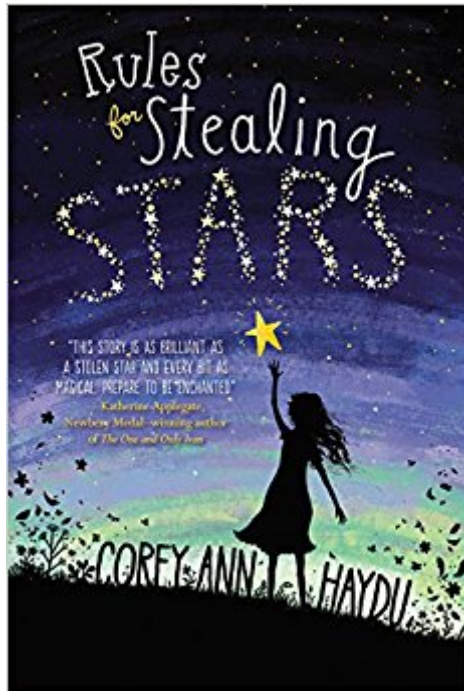




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# Rules For Stealing Stars



## Synopsis

In the tradition of Sharon Creech and Wendy Mass, Corey Ann Haydu's sparkling middle grade debut is a sister story with a twist of magic, a swirl of darkness, and a whole lot of hope. Silly is used to feeling left out. Her three older sisters think she's too little for most things—especially when it comes to dealing with their mother's unpredictable moods and outbursts. This summer, Silly feels more alone than ever when her sisters keep whispering and sneaking away to their rooms together, returning with signs that something mysterious is afoot: sporting sunburned cheeks smudged with glitter and gold hair that looks like tinsel. When Silly is brought into her sisters' world, the truth is more exciting than she ever imagined. The sisters have discovered a magical place that gives them what they truly need: an escape from the complications of their home life. But there are dark truths there, too. Silly hopes the magic will be the secret to saving their family, but she's soon forced to wonder if it could tear them apart.

## Book Information

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Best Sellers Rank: #644,800 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #84 in Books > Children's Books > Growing Up & Facts of Life > Difficult Discussions > Drugs #455 in Books > Children's Books > Growing Up & Facts of Life > Difficult Discussions > Illness #884 in Books > Children's Books > Growing Up & Facts of Life > Fiction

Age Range: 8 - 12 years

Grade Level: 3 - 7

## Customer Reviews

Gr 4—Silly's family is in distress. Moving to their New Hampshire summer house, which was supposed to help, has only exacerbated her mother's drinking problem. Silly's father finds refuge in his academic study of fairy tales, leaving 11-year-old Silly and her three sisters to

fend for themselves. Silly resents the fact that her siblings view her as the baby, and exclude her from the secrets they hide behind their bedroom doors. But the day their mother finally turns her wrath on Silly, the bedroom door cracks open and Astrid pulls Silly into the room to share their secret: the bedroom closet is a magic portal that allows the girls to escape to worlds of their creating. "We let the closet take care of us" Astrid explains, "and it always does." Silly soon discovers other closets are magical as well, feeding what each girl needs. Not all the girls' desires are benevolent, however, and as the summer wears on, the seductive alternative worlds begin to separate the sisters. Silly realizes the siren call of the closets may soon cause irreparable damage. Haydu masterfully portrays the stress of living with an alcoholic parent. While narrator Silly is most fully voiced, all four sisters are well developed and readers share their pain as they search to fill the void left by their mother, creating a pattern of ever-shifting alliances as they seek balance. But when one of the sisters gets trapped in a closet, the sisters must find the strength to break down doors, both literal and metaphorical. VERDICT A well-crafted blend of realism and fantasy. Give to fans of Holly Goldberg Sloan's *Counting By 7s* (Dial, 2013) and Sarah Weeks's *So B It* (Harper, 2004).

•Nancy Nadig, Penn Manor School District, Lancaster, PA --This text refers to the Digital edition.

"A well-crafted blend of realism and fantasy." (School Library Journal (starred review)) "[A] lyrical story of love and loss... The way the sisters fight and love in equal measure, as well as their basic need for one another, rings poignantly true in this touching and heartwarming story, which contains a tiny bit of magic, right here in the real world." (Booklist (starred review)) "Haydu makes skilled use of her fantastical overlay to create a haunting narrative about the ways family members can fail-but also support-each other." (Publishers Weekly) "Tender, wise, and heartbreakingly lovely, this story is as brilliant as a stolen star, and every bit as magical. Prepare to be enchanted." (Katherine Applegate, Newbery-award winning author of *The One and Only Ivan*) "A gorgeous, profound, deeply felt book that lovingly explores intricate sibling relationships, the crushing weight of family secrets, and the delicate magic of hope. *Rules for Stealing Stars* is sublime." (Anne Ursu, author of *Breadcrumbs* and *The Real Boy*) "Silly and her sisters are flesh-and-bone characters; they gripped me by my very heart and pulled me into their tense and mysterious family story. With beguiling moments of magical realism and engaging turns of phrase, Corey Ann Haydu has crafted a glowing middle grade debut." (Leslie Connor, award-winning author of *Waiting for Normal* and *Crunch*)

I absolutely LOVED Rules For Stealing Stars. It's an amazing story that mixes fantasy, imagination, and real life situations. The fantasy part brings young Silly magic and beautiful lands that may show that behind all beauty, there is evil. Silly and her three sisters are thrown into a jumbled mess of magic and isolated beauty. It was very hard for the four sisters to resist the magic, considering their life situation. This is where the life problems comes in. Their mother is going through addiction problems, while their father is trying hard to show that there is nothing wrong with their mother. So, thank you so much Corey Ann Haydu for giving us the magical world of Silly.

Sisters, magic, and a small town in New England combine to create a sweet, sad story about a deeply troubled but ultimately loving family.

My daughter loved this one !

Incredible for all ages

This book is MAGICAL. It is so beautifully written, and so insightful - I had chills throughout. I still get goosebumps when I think about it! The sister relationships are honest, the way the children deal with the mother's illness, all of it, approached so thoughtfully and believably, even with the fantastical closets woven throughout. A perfect balance of struggle, love, and life's magic. I would give it 100 stars if I could!

Great read! Highly recommend this book to your younger readers.

The real world side of this story was perfection. It was a little slow to start for me, but it picked up around 8% which isn't bad. The family dynamic was believable in its imperfection. The magic side was wonderful and mystical, until the last bit of the story when it went way over the top to move the storyline in for the finish. Magic has to have rules, and even though the title has the word "rules" in it, the author leaves you scratching your head. The magic had no rhyme or reason at the end. I can't explain it without being spoilery. I hate it when a fabulous story lets me down at the end. There were also these weird location jumps, where they were one place and the conversation keeps going and then they are someplace completely different. These jumps threw me off. It was like she forgot where the characters were at the beginning of the conversation. I was approved for this as an eARC

through Edelweiss in return for and honest review.

Only an author having personal knowledge of and personal experience with the heartbreak of a dysfunctional family could have written a novel as emotionally powerful as *Rules for Stealing Stars*. Corey Ann Haydu's introductory letter to the reader confirms that observation. The letter also confirms that one can survive, moving past the pain but never forgetting the turmoil or the memories of the individuals with whom one shared it. Four sisters – twins Eleanor and Astrid, Marla, and Priscilla – must not only cope with a move to their mother's family home in New Hampshire, but also with their mother's alcoholism and their father's oblivious demeanor toward the family dynamics. Their mother repeatedly tells the sisters they must take care of one another and, in particular, they must protect the youngest Priscilla.

"Mom always said you're the special one. While doing so, the three oldest sisters nevertheless minimize and denigrate her by nicknaming her 'Silly'.

"Eleanor is exactly the kind of girl who would get a special closet. I don't deserve it. Yet Silly is the most realistic and perceptive of the siblings. Narrated by Silly, *Rules for Stealing Stars* is a heartbreaking perspective on the effects of alcoholism on a family. Mom's moods change so fast, it's hard to keep track. Sometimes when Mom is in a mood, anything can set her off. Of the family as a whole, Silly says, 'We are all different around Mom – exaggerated, desperate versions of ourselves.' Yet Silly seems to understand there may be an underlying reason for her mother's alcoholism.

"Mom's secrets must be in closets. Maybe she keeps extra bottles in there. As most children will do, the girls believe they are the reason for their mother's behavior. 'If Mom's ever going to get better, it will be because we've all been good.' Each of the sisters and their father exhibit one of the different responses to a family member's addiction. A professor, specializing in fairy tales and mythology, their father lives in a fairy-tale world. 'All the fairy tales are sometimes more

important to him. But than real life. Denying the problem and glossing over the times when his wife enters a recovery program, he is an enabler who has abdicated his role as adult and parent. She [mother] calls Dad Prince Charming mostly with a sneer. He loses himself in the stories on which he bases his lectures. Stories are important, useful to understand the world around us.

Eleanor distances herself from the family and its issues. We are the thing that makes Eleanor imperfect. We are the smudge on the clean, clear window. Her demeanor is stoic, she remains aloof from the world and its turmoil. Eleanor is supposed to be calm and eternally correct and sure. Her secret boyfriend and his family offer Eleanor respite from her own home. Being in love is probably a place that's far away sweeter more romantic her own. Her twin Astrid escapes into a fantasy world of her own creation. She has a whole wild world in her head, a perfect escape always ready. She discovers the secret of their home's closets and uses it. Marla, the "middle child is angry and feels neglected.

I try hardest to do the most I love her the deepest understand her the best. She, of the siblings, is most likely to follow in her mother's footsteps.

Her feelings are the darkest scariest biggest. After discovering the secret of the closets, three sisters come together as they seek to rescue Marla and to prevent her from succumbing to the same path as their mother. Her problem wasn't leaving the closet, it was working so hard to forget real life.

Corey Ann Haydu has written an extremely poignant novel. "Rules for Stealing Stars" will resonate with anyone who has experienced the power of addiction over a family member or who has experienced addiction personally. Although this novel is targeted at readers in the 8 to 12 year old category, it is one adults and older teens will enjoy. The subject of alcoholism and its impact on a family are important topics for everyone to understand. The language and situations are appropriate for any age reader. I will be recommending this fine novel to my reading friends.

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