

The Furies

Corey Croft

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Brutal realism marks the turns of this coming-of-age novel, set during the 1990s drug boom.

The city of Fury is both a haven and a hell for the teens who call it home. In Corey Croft's gritty novel *The Furies*, a crew of friends are divided on whether or not to escape Fury, or to embrace its physical, social, and psychological boundaries.

Cava and Luc grew up within shouting distance of one another's front stoops in the Oxford Projects. By seventeen, they are as much brothers as they are best friends. But as the pair begin their senior year of high school, their lives start moving at different speeds.

Encouraged by his lifelong pal Sally and his girlfriend Anjuli, Cava considers college and a life outside of Fury; meanwhile, Luc becomes a full-fledged drug dealer, in part to pay the debts of his addicted older brother. Still, love and loyalty dictate that Cava can't leave his friend to fend for himself as Luc's family and future unravel.

The pair serve as the nucleus for the novel's expansive circle of characters, many of whom illustrate stereotypes: the neighborhood nerd, the slut, the shifty loner. But the teens avoid becoming caricatures; the motivations behind their actions are clear and believable. Sally's obsessive focus on academics and extracurricular activities as a path out of the projects is understandable after she recounts a vicious brawl wherein one combatant used a cheese grater to remove another's tattoo; Cava barely recalls such fights, which are an everyday feature of the Fury.

Extensive character development, often achieved through recollections or longer descriptive passages, sometimes stalls the story. Detailed descriptions of the shifting cityscape, particularly in the book's first few chapters, slow the pace. Later sections, especially those following a tragic event, are rapid, signaled by changing chapter titles that come near giving away too much about the book's turning point.

Fury, a stand-in for one of Vancouver's working-class suburbs, propels the plot more than any single character or event. Its residents are forced to face the realities of a drug boom that plagued many urban areas in the late 1990s. Dead-on dialogue is punctuated with slang and song lyrics from the era, and scenes depict drug dens, dog fights, and other grim settings without flinching. Parts of the story are for mature audiences, and underage drinking, drug use, and other illegal activities are ubiquitous.

Although its key characters are teens, *The Furies* diverges from conventional coming-of-age novels because of how much Cava, Luc, and the others have already seen and done in their brief lives. The book's depictions of poverty, violence, and abuse are authentic. *The Furies* will appeal to both adults and mature teens.

CHARLENE OLDHAM (September 19, 2019)

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