

This Dream Will Devour Us

by Emma Clancey



An intoxicating mix of magic and the machinations of the rich and powerful creates a compulsive, bingeable read for readers who love Krystal Sutherland and Karen McManus.

RECOMMENDED FOR

14–18 (Upper Secondary)

THEMES

Betrayal, intimacy, trust, murder, high society, romantic tension, queerness, bisexuality, mystery, fantasy, magic, family

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SYNOPSIS

Sometimes you have to kill a dream to escape a nightmare.

Nora is the opposite of lucky. She's still wrangling her dead dad's debts when a mysterious illness lands her brother in hospital. But her fortunes take an unexpected turn when she wins the lottery to attend the Lamour family's exclusive magical Dream Gala. If Nora can win over the Lamour heirs, she'll get a coveted spot in their magical training program – and the money she needs to save her brother.

There's just one problem: Nora never bought a lottery ticket.

Determined to discover who wants her at the Gala – and why – Nora plunges headfirst into magical high society. Caught up in a decadent world of brutal billionaires and cutthroat celebrities, Nora is soon in over her head. When her search for answers uncovers a sinister conspiracy, will Nora stay silent or risk the wrath of a family powerful enough to get away with murder?

Q&A WITH EMMA CLANCEY

Q: Tell us about some of the themes you wanted to explore in your novel.

Emma Clancey: At its core, *This Dream Will Devour Us* is about how we find meaning and nurture genuine relationships in a world that often rewards us for being inauthentic. Every character in this book – whether good or evil – is, to some extent, a liar. They each believe lying and presenting an 'alternate' version of themselves to the world is necessary to survive or succeed.

For many of them, the habit of inauthenticity is so engrained that they start to lose themselves – and the people they care about. Ultimately, it's by showing vulnerability and revealing their authentic selves that our main cast get their happy endings.

The novel also uses a fantasy lens to explore real-world disparities in access to healthcare. 'Levincium', a magical pharmaceutical product, is financially inaccessible to most people in this world, leading to preventable deaths for the sake of profit. In the tradition of young adult literature, we see our teenage cast rising up to confront the flaws of this system. While enacting real-world change is far more complex, I hope *This Dream Will Devour Us* is a reminder to young readers to engage critically with the systems around them – and that they do have the power to push for change.

Q: What inspired you to write *This Dream Will Devour Us*?

Emma Clancey: As fantasy writers, we're often asking the question: *What would the world look like if magic was real?* My (perhaps slightly cynical) answer is that someone would find a way to sell it – and then make *a lot* of money. I was tossing that idea around – *how would magic operate in a capitalist system?* – when I was assigned to a new hospital for the third year of my medical degree. Nearly every day, I passed Sydney's iconic Coca-Cola sign in Kings Cross on my way to the hospital, and was reminded of my Year Nine English classes, where I'd studied Baz Luhrmann's *Romeo + Juliet* (1996). In the film, there's a billboard inspired by the Coca-Cola sign, but instead of the brand logo, Luhrmann's version reads 'L'amour'.

I started thinking about a world where 'l'amour' ('love') was a brand or product as recognisable as Coca-Cola. And what product could be more universally enticing than magic? Considering where I was walking to, it's not surprising that I started picturing this world's magic as a pharmaceutical product controlled by an immensely powerful family: the Lamours. At the time, a number of medications were in shortage, and it was both fascinating and unsettling to think about how the Lamours' monopoly on magic could affect every facet of our lives – from healthcare to education to warfare to art.

In *This Dream Will Devour Us*, the Lamour family often compares magic use to dreaming. This started out as a reference to Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* – Mercutio's comment that 'dreamers often lie' proves very relevant to this book. In fact, 'Dreamers Lie' was my

working title when I was drafting. As a big horror fan, I was excited to explore what happens when those lies add up and a dream turns into a nightmare. Although I didn't want this story to get *too* dark, I did draw inspiration from an all-time favourite horror movie of mine, *The Thing* (1982). I won't say too much more about that ... Spoilers!

On a lighter note, I also wanted to highlight how human connection brings meaning in an image-focused and materialistic world. Several characters exchange letters in the book, a detail inspired by an annual tradition I shared with my friends in high school. Every New Year's Eve, we would write each other letters reflecting on the past year and sharing our hopes for the next. Like a certain character in *This Dream Will Devour Us*, I've kept them all. Funnily enough, it was through one of those letters that a friend made me promise I would finally write my first novel. Four years later, here we are!

ABOUT EMMA CLANCEY



Emma Clancey is a fantasy writer and medical student living in Sydney. In 2024, she was awarded the Ray Koppe/Australian Society of Authors Young Writers Fellowship. Emma's debut novel, *This Dream Will Devour Us*, is a YA fantasy thriller that blends her passions for magic and medicine. When not writing or horrifying her friends with unsolicited medical facts, she's likely jabbering about her latest reads on Instagram @emma.clancey.

IN-CLASS DISCUSSIONS AND ACTIVITIES

Cover Analysis

- *Visual Symbolism:*

What might the hands pulling at the necklace symbolise in terms of power, control, or conflict? How do these visual elements reflect possible themes in the story?

- *Character Focus:*

How is the central figure (the young woman) depicted in terms of posture, expression and styling? What might her portrayal suggest about her role in the narrative?

- *Title Interpretation:*

What do you think the phrase '*This Dream Will Devour Us*' suggests? How does it contrast with traditional ideas of dreams as positive or aspirational?

- *Use of Colour and Light:*

How do the colours used in the background (cosmic purples, golds, and blues) contribute to the mood or genre of the cover? What tone do they set?

- *Typography and Layout:*

How does the bold, fractured style of the title font contribute to the emotional impact of the cover? What might it imply about the story's structure or tone?

- *Genre Expectations:*

Based on the visual and textual elements, what genre do you think this book belongs to? What clues help you decide?

- *Audience Appeal:*

Who do you think is the intended audience for this novel, and how does the cover design appeal to them specifically?

- *Narrative Inference:*

Based on the imagery and text, what kind of journey or transformation do you predict the protagonist will undergo?

Genre

Fantasy novels featuring magic often serve as a powerful lens through which to explore real-world issues, such as identity, power, morality and social justice. What is it about the fantasy genre that helps us reflect on real-life struggles, challenges or societal structures? How does *This Dream Will Devour Us*, in particular, illuminate deeper truths about our real world? Use specific examples from the text to support your response.

- Is 'levincium' a fantasy or sci-fi element?
- Could this world be considered a dystopia?

Intertextuality

'But, soft!' he quotes, offering me a flower. 'What light through yonder window breaks?' ...

'Well, hooking up with Romeo didn't help.' (pages 221-222)

Intertextuality refers to the ways in which texts reference, reshape or respond to other texts, creating layers of meaning. How does Emma Clancey use the famous scene between Romeo and Juliet in Shakespeare's play to create new meaning in this scene between Nora and Dominic de Silva?

- In Act 1, Scene 4 of *Romeo and Juliet*, Romeo and Mercutio engage in banter about dreams as they walk through the streets on the way to the Capulets' household. The sceptical Mercutio mockingly says of Romeo's dreaming, that people who dream often lie. Romeo quickly retorts with a pun that they lie in bed asleep, as they dream true things.

Does this scene change how you read Henri Lamour's statement on page 85 that his family's dream is 'to make your dreams come true'?

- Does it create a deeper meaning for the book's title, *This Dream Will Devour Us*?
- And finally, can you spot the homage to Emma Clancey's favourite horror film, *The Thing* (1982) in *This Dream Will Devour Us*?

Themes – Authenticity

Emma Clancey says of her novel, 'At its core [it is] about how we find meaning and nurture genuine relationships in a world that often rewards us for being inauthentic. Every character in this book – whether good or evil – is, to some extent, a liar. They each believe lying and presenting an “alternate” version of themselves to the world is necessary to survive or succeed.'

- Choose one major character from the novel and explore the tension that exists between the person they are and the person they are expected to be.
- In what ways does that character's lies shape their relationships, and how does this impact their ability to find true happiness?
- In your opinion, does this tension exist for most people in real-life and is it exacerbated by social media?

Themes – Relationships/Love

- Nora, Angela and Remy all have an older sibling. What parallels emerge between these three sibling relationships? How does Remy's 'found family' compare to his real family?
- Why is the Lamours' surname significant and/or ironic?
- Do you think the romantic relationships in this book are authentic or fake? Do they start one way and end another? If so, what causes them to change?
- What do the letters sent between Nora, Remy and Dom symbolise?



And Just for Fun ...

1. Which character in the novel is the most like you?
2. Which character is the least like you?
3. Which character would you choose as your best friend?
4. Would the world be a better place if levic really existed and was freely available?
5. Would you take levic in the world that Nora, Angela, Dom and Remy inhabit?
6. Who would you cast to play each of the four main characters in the film version of *This Dream Will Devour Us*?
7. What songs would you choose to include in a playlist for the novel?
8. What do you predict might happen in a sequel?