



Adverbs

Daniel Handler

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Hello. I am Daniel Handler, the author of this book. Did you know that authors often write the summaries that appear on their book's dust jacket? You might want to think about that the next time you read something like, "A dazzling page-turner, this novel shows an internationally acclaimed storyteller at the height of his astonishing powers."

"Adverbs" is a novel about love -- a bunch of different people, in and out of different kinds of love. At the start of the novel, Andrea is in love with David -- or maybe it's Joe -- who instead falls in love with Peter in a taxi. At the end of the novel, it's Joe who's in the taxi, falling in love with Andrea, although it might not be Andrea, or in any case it might not be the same Andrea, as Andrea is a very common name. So is Allison, who is married to Adrian in the middle of the novel, although in the middle of the ocean she considers a fling with Keith and also with Steve, whom she meets in an automobile, unless it's not the same Allison who meets the Snow Queen in a casino, or the same Steve who meets Eddie in the middle of the forest. . . .

It might sound confusing, but that's love, and as the author -- me -- says, "It is not the nouns. The miracle is the adverbs, the way things are done." This novel is about people trying to find love in the ways it is done before the volcano erupts and the miracle ends. Yes, there's a volcano in the novel. In my opinion a volcano automatically makes a story more interesting.

Adverbs Details

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From Reader Review Adverbs for online ebook

Cindy says

I don't generally write reviews, but this book disappointed me to the degree that I feel compelled to write one anyway. Honestly, I'm a bit surprised I managed to make it to the end.

One thing that drove me insane was how difficult it was to follow which characters were belonged where, and how they were connected to each other. The author drops these hints as to who someone is- a girl mentioned in passing in one passage suddenly receives a central role in another. Little tidbits like this make you jump backward constantly trying to connect all the little dots that are teased at here, yet this leaves you with nothing but a headache. The cast is too large, and it all gets tangled together. Admittedly, it seemed charming when described in the dust jacket, but the reality of it doesn't play out well at all. There is no definite transition from one character to another; sometimes, the irregularity of it throws you off, though not in a good way. Maybe it's just me, but when an author throws hints of this or that at me, my mind immediately tries to make the connections.

Also, the author tries to force certain images on the reader for no apparent reason. Magpies and ripped purses come to mind. It all seems to be tied up with an attempt to be clever that doesn't quite translate. The author's use of adverbs to describe the type of loving that's occurring also fails to translate. It's a cute idea, but it always just seems forced, the adverbs stuck in at random points of the stories because that's the way the book is supposed to be structured, even when it feels like you trying to force the wrong puzzle piece into place.

The reason that I'm giving this book 2 stars as opposed to one is because many of the insights into the nature of love are thought-provoking and well done. Some go over the top, but it doesn't necessarily take away from the ones that don't. This is clearly the focus of the author's attention, however, and the narrative suffers because of this. It seems as though in the beginning Handler was attempting to craft individual voices for the characters, and it actually worked. But this was lost as the book progressed, where later stories featuring the same characters didn't have the individuality they possessed in the earlier ones.

I apologize if this seems like a lot of nit-picking. Perhaps it's an instance of finding one fault and that leading to a whole flood of them; perhaps the overall setup of this book just isn't for me. All I know is that I wouldn't recommend it to anyone else.

Ryan says

"This is a novel about love," says the back cover. Well, it's half right. It is about love, but calling it a novel is a bit of a stretch. The book has no central character or plot, just a series of stories, sometimes connected, about a bunch of different people who sometimes pop up in each others' stories. I think maybe someone might say that love is the main character, but having a main character who's schizophrenic and/or prone to wild mood swings is a difficult task to pull off without a plot as a guide, and so it fails in that respect. As a set of short stories, the constant attempts to link things together (by mentioning characters from the other stories) seems like kind of a halfassed sort of connection. Nevertheless, every once in a while, you'll stumble upon a sentence, or passage, or paragraph of startling beauty, grace, style, and humor, and that kind of makes up for the flaws, at least to some extent.

Shelly says

I became interested in this book after reading a rave review by a user on this very website (Hey! It works!). I picked the book up yesterday and have already finished it. That never happens with me. Generally there at least 20 naps taken between covers. As you will see if you read any other reviews this "novel" is more a series of intertwined vignettes. All stories about love framed in chapters named after various adverbs: Immediately, Briefly, Obviously, Clearly, Naturally, etc. Also, if you've read other reviews, you'll see that there are people who have a problem with this. The sequences of events don't follow any sort of order, and characters who pop back into different chapters may or may not be recurring--they could just share the same name as a previous character. So it can get confusing and confusion, rightly so, frustrates some readers. I just chose to believe that if there weren't other obvious references to a previously mentioned character, than this was somebody new with the same name. Most experience, after all, is universal. And in the end, it doesn't matter, as Handler says in the book it's not about the people's names, or various recurring themes (like cocktails, magpies, volcanoes, and the Ice Queen)--it's about love and all the various shapes and forms that love takes in our lives. It's not cheesy, there are no tears to be shed (although it's not without its touching moments). It's clever, original, and Handler certainly (clearly, obviously, surely, blatantly, undoubtedly, and definitely--badump bump) has a way with words.

Here's one of my favorite passages:

This is love, saltwater taffy. Pretty much everybody has had some. Somebody offers it on a day when you have nothing to do, and most likely you'll take it and put it in your mouth. It unites us, saltwater taffy, but whose favorite is it? Who likes it best? Just about nobody. So why do we eat it? This love story is about this style of love, this sweet thing that exists unasked for, that everybody eats out of the same bag. But also it is about what it says on the shack. I was there myself, and the large sign said: COME IN AND WATCH US MAKE IT.

Kelly (and the Book Boar) says

Find all of my reviews at: <http://52bookminimum.blogspot.com/>

It's time for my library's annual Winter Reading Challenge. The challenge, should I choose to accept it (duh, of course I do), is to read five books between January 20th and March 20th. Once completed I can earn myself yet another bragalicious mug for my collection . . .

Oooops, wrong mug . . .

Easy peasy lemon squeazy, right? Well, the kicker this year is the theme is "Love on the Rocks."

Romance is not my forté. The extra kick in the pants is out of the 25 suggested selections, I've already read

10. Although reading what the librarians suggest isn't a requirement, I like to choose my 5 from their list whenever possible. That's what led me to *Adverbs*. Uhhhhhh . . .

Yeah. Daniel Handler might possibly be the *biggest* hit or miss author I've ever come across. Being a mom I loved the world that Lemony Snicket built, and as a grown-up I was floored by Handler's ability to flip the switch and write something like *The Basic Eight* . . . But then I read *Why We Broke Up* and it was so "meh" that I didn't quite know what to expect. Well, I should've expected zilch 'cause this book was a real turd.

Handler describes *Adverbs* as a "novel about love – a bunch of different people in and out of different kinds of love." What it really turned out to be was a series of unfortunate events (Ha! See what I did there?) – little vignettes that had characters, San Francisco, and yellow-billed magpies as repeating items that would tie them together. What it lacked? Any kind of depth or ability to entertain me. Wait, I take that back. The story "Clearly" was brilliant (but it was also creepy instead of "romantic," so you should probably take that statement with a grain of salt). Sadly, one snippet of a whole book is not enough to bump my rating up to 2 Stars. The schizy, rambling style aside, when Handler opted to break the fourth wall at the 68% mark, I knew this book had officially jumped the shark. However, I don't have the ability to "DNF" so I trudged through to the end, growing ever more bored and questioning how I could have ever enjoyed someone who wrote such pompous drivel. Let's hope the next four books in the challenge aren't lousy.

Alright, enough with the bad stuff. Now I'm going to bore you with the awesomeness that is my public library. First, I work two blocks away from it, so whenever I need to escape from my crappy job it's super easy. And what an escape it is . . .

That's just the parking garage. When you get inside it's soooooo purrrrrty . . .

With features like the old bank vault that has been turned into a "film vault" where movies are played . . .

And the children's library that literally has you stepping into a book . . .

Or the rooftop, where you can enjoy a game of chess *Alice In Wonderland* style . . .

I'm forever grateful to my beautiful library. It's the only way I could ever be able to read 200+ books a year, so one stinker of a recommendation is easily forgiven :)

Brent Legault says

I've never read Handler's kid stuff but *Adverbs* did make me feel young again, if you don't mind that dust-smudged cliché. Not that I'm old even. And I certainly don't yearn for a lost childhood. *Adverbs*, the novel, or rather *Adverbs: A Novel*, made English over for me again, for the little while I was inside it. I had that giddy feeling I remember from my toddling times after reading my first "grown-ups" book -- that is, my first book without pictures. I don't know what that book was but it doesn't matter. It's the feeling that's important, that twang of wonder. And I have to say with some chagrin, because it makes me sound sentimental (or simply mental), but this book gave me the grins, like one of those drugs plucked from under forest ferns I haven't taken since high school. I felt like a fool while reading this book. The kind of fool that people point too and say: "That idiot must be the luckiest man alive."

Mike Puma says

shhhhh! This review isn't for everyone. Neither is this book. But like this book, this review is for you—you only. Maybe you and that other guy, or the woman who contorts herself trying to see the title of what your reading and thinking no one notices her doing it. She might be a character in the story, *Adverbs*, but she isn't because that would be that story, and this is this story, which isn't a story, exactly, but it is because it's a review...of sorts, the only type I'm in the mood to write. So, anyway.

Are you between titles? Wondering what to read next? But a little oppressed by all the depressing books you've been reading. Pressed into the service of someone else's To Read list. So much pressure. Or, for whatever reason, right now, another Bolaño is a no-go, or the thought of toting around another whopper Pynchon pinches a psychic nerve or Bernhard is too hard or... well, you get the picture. If anything like those conditions are imposing on you, and you just want to read something fun, but probably not something with **Giant Man-eating Crabs** locked in mortal battle with **Monstrous Blue Slimy Slugs** while **Shiny People** suck the necks of **Unsuspecting Virgins** while **body parts** are seen to **Heave** and **Throb**, then you might just like the smart and funny *Adverbs*.

Now I know, Daniel Handler's alter-ego, Lemony Snickett, would probably try to discourage you from reading his (Snickett's) books—so might I. But Handler, Handler himself, that's another matter entirely. This is Steve Erickson meets Tom Robbins, the Tom Robbins from when we thought he was funny, or when he was funny, at any rate, the Tom Robbins of once-upon-a-time.

Now in keeping with current standards, I should place HIGHLY RECOMMENDED up against the left-margin. But I won't; I'm contentious and curmudgeonly. Instead, I'm placing it right here:

Highly Recommended

—when you're ready, when it's time for something fun or funny, or when you're just not quite ready for anything else. You could do far, far worse.

Oh, yeah, since you probably expected something like a real review, consider MJ's or Ian's, either much finer than mine.

The right book at the right time for me.

Melissa says

I am utterly and totally confused by this book. To start off this review, I think a quote from the author about this book would be appropriate.

Quoth Handler "Yes, there's a volcano in the novel. In my opinion a volcano automatically makes a story more interesting." And there is a volcano in the novel, it seems to be one of his favorite things to talk about. In addition to this there is an abundance of birds, alcohol, and taxis.

I'd like to provide a timeline and a list of characters but the story is so jumbled it wouldn't make sense. The characters all reoccur during the novel but are so unmemorable you can't keep track of who's who. In addition, some seem to have mystical powers in what is otherwise, a realistic fiction type book.

The novel is supposed to be about love, different forms and presentations of it. However, if Handler's love is supposed to be real love it scares me. Most of his characters are stalkerish in quality and their love is very superficial. There are several divorces, break ups, hook ups and just plain fake love. At the end it seems several of the female characters are pregnant and possibly this means another type of love to the author.

Handler's writing style is very disjointed. I think he tries to be more flowery and "hip" with his writing than he needs to be. It jumps around so much that you just get lost and confused. The book, at 272 pages went on way too long for my tastes. If you like the odd and random type of book go ahead and read, otherwise I recommend spending your time on a better piece of literature.

Sterlingcindysu says

Forget the adverbs, here's some adjectives that describe me after turning the last page.

Confused.

Bewildered.

Uncomprehending.

There's a part in the book that talks about how, when love goes wrong, you want all those hours back that you spent with the other person. I feel that way about this book, although I didn't really spend that many hours reading it.

I thought it was a novel, but it read like short stories because there's no plot. But the characters change in each story, and aren't identified at times. There may or may not be a volcano. I don't know. And I don't think it had very much to do with love.

Ian "Marvin" Graye says

Back Flips and Party Tricks

I hated the first chapter of this novel, so much so that it took almost 200 pages for me to recover and trust Daniel Handler.

Still, once it all started to come together, I did an amazing about face.

By the end, I loved “Adverbs” and felt sad that I had to leave this crazy assortment of characters behind (or was it them who left me behind?).

I didn't want the party to end.

Across the Great Divide

The first chapter concerns an unnamed apparently heterosexual male character who leaves his partner, Andrea, catches a cab and immediately falls in love with the homophobic male cab driver, Peter.

I couldn't understand why Daniel Handler wanted to confront me with this character so early in the book, when we're just starting to get to know each other.

I mean, who would be so totally self-deluded as to think you could instantaneously fall in love with an unsuspecting character across both the sexuality divide and the passenger's seat?

What prospects of success could this character (or indeed, this novel) have after an opening gambit like that?

At First Sight

Was Handler being homophobic?

I don't think so. Certainly, there was no hint of homophobia in the rest of the book.

So it's quite possible that he was just making the point that many of us can (or believe we can) fall in love this instantaneously (incidentally, the name of the chapter), that we can experience love at first sight.

Indeed, many of us sustain ourselves with the hope that one day it might happen to us, and that it will involve somersaults and other party, if not circus, tricks (even though, as Handler points out, there is no more impossible task than “falling in love in a nightclub”).

So this novel provided me with a valuable lesson in my ongoing literary sex education.

Don't hurry the author.

This early in a book, they might just be engaging in foreplay.

Give them time. They might grow on you. You might get in the mood. You might like it.

Sometimes, you can't judge a book by its lover.

To Boldly Go Where No Grammarian Has Gone Before

Another reason for my skepticism was the structure of the novel.

It consists of 17 chapters, each of which is headed by an adverb.

Most of us are taught to eschew adverbs in writing.

Here, Handler has won and asserted the freedom, not just to use them, but to bring them forward and upfront, if that's not too adverbial.

In Which the Author Proceeds Listily...

My initial gripe was that they're not a particularly inspiring choice of adverbs, at least superficially (which wasn't on the list).

I don't think any (or many) of them would be on my (or perhaps even your) list of favourite adverbs on which to base a novel.

Here is Handler's list:

"..., **immediately**, obviously, **arguably**, particularly, **briefly**, soundly, **frigidly**, collectively, **symbolically**, clearly, **naturally**, wrongly, **truly**, not particularly, **often**, barely, **judgmentally**, ..."

...When He Could Have Proceeded Lustily

Where are the adverbs you can get excited about, like these examples that I have chosen randomly (you might have ones that are better or otherly):

"..., **suddenly**, strangely, **wonderfully**, amusingly, **tantalizingly**, wholeheartedly, **equally**, madly, **unconditionally**, courageously, **gently**, secretively, **quietly**, noisily, **gracefully**, adoringly, **pathetically**, sweetly, **heavenly**, ..."

But then, these examples are probably just the adverbs that we have been counselled to eschew.

Something They Don't Teach You in Grammar School

So what did Daniel Handler have in mind?

Why did he choose such a neutral, neutered, sexless bunch of adverbs?

How did he plan to handle his subject matter?

How did he plan to seduce us with such words?

How did he plan to give us full body massages using these words as his hands?

How could he tickle our fancy using these words as feathers?

Impossible.

Or so I thought.

Love Traversed Adverbally

These words mean almost nothing by themselves.

Without more, they are just adverbs.

Handler's trick is to recognise that his recipe required one more ingredient.

Step 2: Just add verbs.

Adverbs can't pleasure us alone.

They need a verb to qualify. They need a word they can relate to.

And the word is Love.

Love Probed Facetiously

Love is a diamond and each chapter explores a different facet through the eyes of different beholders.

There is some contention as to whether the book is really a novel or a collection of short stories.

However, the chapters are not discrete in the sense that they have no relation to each other.

Daniel Handler adds detail, chapter by chapter, so that meaning and understanding accumulate over the course of time, like a magpie assembles its nest, or photos add up to a photo album, or songs with similar themes add up to a concept album.

Characters, or at least names, from one chapter turn up in later chapters.

We learn new things on the way, constantly revising our opinions and speculating about the destiny of the characters.

So there is a cumulative wisdom at work, which unites the chapters into a novel of sorts.

Do You Believe in Miracles?

Everybody in the novel strives for love.

If we are lucky, love will touch and enliven us.

If we do nothing, we die.

It's a struggle of Sisyphusian proportions.

Life is short, time conspires against us.

We live on fault lines.

There are catastrophes occurring all around us.

We can also be distracted by petty troubles and worries, the detritus of past relationships that hang around to haunt us.

We are mad not to seek out and seize the opportunity for love while we can:

"What are we thinking? A volcano could destroy this town tomorrow, or guys with guns. Or both. Of course there's going to be another catastrophe."

The Magic Bus that Takes Me to You

The novel is not so much a hero's journey, as a trip on a love bus, perhaps a shortbus.

Each member of the ensemble cast departs from their past, probes around while looking for love, and arrives at their own different version of the destination they aspire to.

Ultimately, with "Adverbs", Daniel Handler has lovingly crafted "A Series of Fortunate Events" for our delectation and inspiration.

Hitching a Ride with a Cab Driver

For each of us, there's a different way to find love.

And how we go about it can influence our prospects of success.

We must make choices on our journey:

"They say love's like a bus, and if you wait long enough another one will come along, but not in this place where the buses are slow and most of the cute ones are gay."

"I could take the bus," Joe said out loud, "but a taxi is better..."

So in the last chapter this particular Joe chooses a taxi to fast track him on the next phase of his journey, wishing and hoping the miracle of love will bless him:

"Love is a preference, and Joe found one as he was summoned to do."

"He found the love story he preferred, although he didn't render this judgment officially until three years later when he and this cabdriver right here [Andrea] lay laughing and naked over how giddy he was during the miracle, during the blatant afternoon they met."

I Never Metafiction I Didn't Like

It would be remiss not to mention the sense of humour that winds through the novel.

At first, I thought I detected a cruelty, a sourness, a bitterness that seemed to be working on a sublemonal level, the occasional lemony snicker.

In retrospect, I think I was wrong.

I rushed to judgment, when I should have been patient.

The characters are diverse, but Daniel Handler loves them and their quest for love equally.

He likens love to diamonds and lovers to birds (specifically magpies) “looking for shiny things and carrying them around in their beaks”.

He deftly and humorously works real books about magpies [they are described as “attractive, artful and aggressive”] and a diamond ring [which is lost in his work and found in the other, real book] into his own work.

He locates his own bird tale in another bird's nest, he places his diamonds in another jeweller's setting.

He co-opts a whole world of fairy tales, fact and fiction into his own story.

In Which Our Lovers Arrive, Eventually...

Within his fictional ecosystem, *“it is not the diamonds or the birds, the people or the potatoes [that are the miracles]; it is the adverbs, the way things are done. It is the way love gets done despite every catastrophe.”*

Finding love is a miracle, the stuff of fairy tales, a legendary achievement, though not everybody experiences their own miracle:

“It can't happen to everyone – as in life, some people will be killed off before they get something shiny, and some of them will screw it up and others will just end up with the wrong kind of bird – but some of them will arrive at love.

“Surely somebody will arrive, in a taxi perhaps, attractively, artfully, aggressively, or any other way it is done.”

And so it is that at the end of the book, Andrea takes Joe to his destination, stops the cab and announces, “You’ve arrived.”

He has come a long way for love.

...And the Reader Nods, Agreeably

The significance of the novel is not necessarily that they found love (the verbs), or that love happened to Andrea and Joe (the nouns), the significance is how it happened to them.

In Daniel Handler’s grammar of love, it’s the adverbs that make the difference.

He proved his point attractively, artfully, and aggressively.

By the end of the novel, I agreed with him.

Wholeheartedly.

Amy says

This book looks, at first, to be a series of short stories that are titled with adverbs - Particularly, Often, etc. A cute concept that sparks some curiosity. But it really gets going when you realize that all the characters are connected, but the stories are not chronological nor are narrations always comprehensible. Sometimes Joe isn't Joe and Mike is called Mark but his name is something else, and there are 2 Andreas, or are there? A mental map is so not good enough. I would suggest writing down EVERY name you come across as soon as you begin, and then draw the connection lines. I really wish I had done that. The writing is interesting, especially when it's not straightforward, and I often felt like the author was messing with our heads on purpose and getting a good laugh out of our attempts to decipher his intent. The stories in themselves are enjoyable and focus on emotions, life and death, love, optimism, pessimism, cynicism, etc. If you have to be on top of the plot all the time, then this book might not be for you - you just have to be able to accept that it is not possible to understand everything all the time. Maybe that's the whole point.

Fiona says

Reading this book is like looking at things at the bottom of a swimming pool. You can't hear very much, or touch them without closing your eyes and holding your breath, and the outlines keep changing and at any rate you're never sure how far away they are, but they're pretty in a fascinating sort of a way. They keep changing, and you can't get a hand on what they actually are or they're meant to represent, so all you can do is look at the shapes and how they keep fluctuating and irregularly morphing in front of your eyes. You have to take them at face value and not fight to explain them in a sentence or follow the thread of them, because the thread is probably not there.

The adverbs of this book are ways that Daniel Handler thinks love happens. Daniel Handler has no idea how love happens, if this is anything to go by, but that's hardly the point. This book reminds me that sometimes I don't need to have as strong a hold on the world as I want to, that the way things are done is sometimes the important or beautiful thing, and that occasionally, when somebody tries to explain to you that love is a bit like saltwater taffy, it's okay to say No It's Bloody Not and keep enjoying it anyway.

Jennifer (aka EM) says

Three is too generous, because I'm mad - deeply mad - at you, Adverbs. You sucked away 17 days of my life for what? WHAT, I ask you? Some clever lines, repeating symbols, cutesy structure - but what the hell was this? A novel? (no) Short stories? (maybe) Intellectual masturbation, because Daniel Handler could? (probably)

By the end I was confused and annoyed, and now I'm reliving that confusion and annoyance. I confess, I've decided to abandon this one short story/chapter/ejaculation before the end, so if that last chapter is critical to the whole flippin' thing coming together marvellously, magically or miraculously, do let me know.

Matt Buchholz says

As is the case with Barenaked Ladies fans and people that think Jay Leno is funny, those that like this book will be judged harshly and possibly abandoned.

Katie says

David Handler is brilliant. This book compiles a bunch of stories involving characters who are intimately or barely connected to each other. Each chapter is a short story but the characters become so intertwined that it feels like a novel. The theme of this book? Love, love, and more love. But it ain't what you think. This isn't a cheesy and cliché book about the heart to heart, folks. This is a book about every kind of love, from the obvious to the mysterious. I think that when I am done reading this book, I will read this book. Again. Lovingly, excitedly, and satisfyingly.

Christopher Allen says

As if this book needed another review . . .

Thousands of readers apparently either love or hate this book or feel something in between too. Love is like this. Sometimes it feels a lot like hate or something in between, and that's OK.

Adverbs is a loosely knit chain of modifiers. Everything is so unrelated in its relatedness. And it's all about love . . . and people, people with similar names and a volcano or a man-made disaster, maybe. Some will see this absurd romp as the work of a genius; some will see it as the brilliant narrative meanderings of a loose-cannon writer. Yeah, and some will see it as tediously bothersome drivel. But why? Why not sit back and enjoy loose-cannon meandering romps? Loosen up. Why so tense? This is a very good question. I wildly found Adverbs wildly entertaining. I'm not sure I'd want to spend an evening with someone who didn't feel wildly about this book.

Adverbs is post-apocalyptic and volcanic (obviously) metafiction about LOVE. Daniel Handler, bless him to Mars and back, takes chances and why shouldn't he? He brings stream-of-consciousness prose to a post-Woolf generation. And that's sexy.

For all the romping hijinks and the meta-apocalyptic banter, Handler does come to conclusions about love. There are profound moments. There are also comic(book) moments. There are songs, there are Mikes and there are magpies. And, seriously, there are the most original and surprising similes. And seriously again: I LOVED this book.

Love,
Chris

MJ Nicholls says

Adverbs has a twisty, clever authorial voice, all-knowing and wise like the best omniscient narrators, which doesn't really deviate from its essential Handlerness, despite inhabiting the emotional realm of his lovesick hipster personnel. But Handler handles words like a panhandler panhandles handles, or a handler handles hands: deftly, with aplomb.

Like *Watch Your Mouth*, Handler uses recurring images, phrases, motifs, characters, spooling them through his stylish prose with its sardonic Sorrentino metacomment, its wily Nabokovian impatience, its Eggersian whimsy. Each chapter corresponds to one particular adverb, but it's irrelevant really, as the star here is the style, and the style succeeds strikingly well at depicting the yearnings and maimings of love. And they're endlessly funny.

Abby says

Jenna once gave me the idea of buying books from Borders and then returning them within 31 days after having read them.

The problems with that practice in my life are not ethical; they are practical:

1) I read in two- to three-months fury spurts, just like how I knit, except the reading trend is unrelated to avoiding other things in my life. Said fury spurts cannot be fabricated or induced, they just happen. I forget this, however, with great frequency, and buy fury spurts' worth of books sometimes without a fury spurt in sight.

2) I fold corners. If you know, you know.

3) Sometimes, at the end of a fury spurt, I get really ambitious and starting picking at the piles of New Yorkers all over my apartment. New Yorkers SUCK YOU IN and do not let you go until you are 13 pages into the article about the concrete industry in New York City and want to die and never read again. Behold: the end of the fury spurt.

4) Sometimes, to stave off the end of the fury spurt, I will try to "take a break," from such heavy heavy reading by listening to podcasts while commuting. Also sometimes, this happens because I can't always keep my eyes open on the bus, particularly when el Jeffo is on the bus and I need to pretend to not be there, or when it is very early in the morning AKA before 10 AM. This, ultimately, takes me away from the *habit* of the fury spurt and behold again: its end.

5) I am constantly overwhelmed by the volume of books in my apartment that I have not read or not finished. Sometimes this is so overwhelming that I stop reading.

Anyway, I bought *Adverbs* with the intention of running through it and returning it, but then I folded corners, slowed to a crawl, and realized a month had passed. That said, it was a good read: a little gimmicky but very

earnest, if that is at all possible.

In case it wasn't abundantly clear: I should not write book reviews.

Kim says

[image error]

Susan says

I hate adverbs, but there was something intriguing about this collection of stories written by the author of the Lemony Snicket books. Unfortunately, this is one of those books that aspires to be something more than it is. While I like the interconnectedness of the stories, I couldn't help feeling like I'd seen this trick somewhere before...and executed less self-consciously. Anyone who reads *Series of Unfortunate Events* is aware of the author's insistence on always keeping one foot in the story. Handler is notorious for his winking asides to the audience and references back to himself, and there's some of that in this book too--in that you feel just a little too uncomfortably aware of the mechanics operating behind it all. You can almost envision Handler clapping himself on the back for all of his cleverness. My favorite part of this book was Handler's contribution to the jacket that mocks self-congratulatory authors. Surprisingly (to use an adverb) the joke ends there, but the self-congratulatory part does not.

Oriana says

This is the kind of book that makes me want to go back and take all my 5-star ratings down to 4, so that giving this one 5 will mean more.

This is the kind of book where, all while I was reading it, I was thinking about how I would read it again, more slowly, more thoughtfully, with more intense concentration.

And so I did; I read it twice through, one after the other, and good fucking grief, it is *so achingly good*. The second time maybe a tiny little bit less so because I already knew so many of the good parts, but still, oh my god please read this book.

He does this stunning thing where all of the chapters / stories sort of have the same metaphors and themes, but they are very vague. Like in almost each story there's a someone dirty and sad, carrying their shoes, who will fall in love or be fallen in love with. And there's magpies and volcanoes and the Snow Queen and taxis and other amazing sort-of recurrences, or maybe more like fragmented repetitions, because each time it's a little different.

Anyway, although it's a novel, the chapters live on their own, and if I can't convince you to read the whole book, please please please will you just hurry up and read "Particularly," "Soundly," "Not Particularly," and "Often," because I think if you don't I will cry.

