



## The Taste of Blue Light

*Lydia Ruffles*

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## **The Taste of Blue Light** Lydia Ruffles

An incandescent, soul-searching story about a broken young woman's search for a truth buried so deep it threatens to consume her, body and mind.

'Since I blacked out, the slightest thing seems to aggravate my brain and fill it with fire'

These are the things Lux knows:

She is an Artist.

She is lucky.

She is broken.

These are the things she doesn't know:

What happened over the summer.

Why she ended up in hospital.

Why her memories are etched in red.

'The nightmares tend to linger long after your screams have woken you up ...'

Desperate to uncover the truth, Lux's time is running out. If she cannot piece together the events of the summer and regain control of her fractured mind, she will be taken away from everything and everyone she holds dear.

If her dreams don't swallow her first.

## **The Taste of Blue Light Details**

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Author : Lydia Ruffles

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## **From Reader Review The Taste of Blue Light for online ebook**

### **Karen Whittard says**

I would like to start by saying thank you to Netgalley, the publishers and Lydia Ruffles for the opportunity to read this book for an honest review.

This is an all consuming book of massive proportions which will leave all readers breathless.

The book tells the story of Lux a art student. Who is trying to uncover what happened to her over the summer. She remembers nothing but she knows something isn't right. She keeps suffering from intense pain and she has nightmares but when she goes to the doctors they declare her fit and well.

As you go in the journey with Lux through her paranoia, anxiety, depression, confusion and pain. The reader is as much in the dark as Lux is. You can try to piece together the puzzle pieces but o had no idea what was going on until Lux discovered the truth.

Lux is such a vulnerable character who lays everything out in the open. You can't help feeling for her and wanting to take her under your wing. To try and help her piece together what has happened and give her the support she so desperately needs.

This is a moving story that had me moved to tears at the ending of the book. If I have a small criticism it's that at times I felt that it was a little slow and that the last section of the book was a little rushed. But all in all a beautifully written book.

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### **Emer says**

Wow.

I am blown away by this read.

It's rare that a contemporary YA book leaves me feeling so breathless. I absolutely did not see any of that coming.

The Taste of Blue Light follows the story of young art student Lux and her attempt to discover what happened to her one fateful summer night. She can't remember. She has nightmares, she has physical manifestations of pain but according to all her doctors she is physically fine. But emotionally she is bereft. She is struggling. As the reader you are in the dark as much as Lux is about the event that changed her whole sense of being as much as she is and you live each of her struggles with her. You see her fight her parents, act out with friends, get panic attacks, suffer from anxiety, paranoia, see her fixate on unexplained things... Her senses are all acutely heightened but to an almost manic degree. It's clear that she must be suffering from some sort of PTSD but neither the reader nor Lux knows until eventually things begin to fit into place.

But trust me. When you find out it won't be what you expected. At least I was completely floored by it. And what's brilliant about this book is that it feels honest. It doesn't feel like a cheap or tacky attempt to be relevant. Because this book is incredibly relevant.

Lux is such a brilliantly written character. She is both likeable and unlikeable at different times. I found myself caring deeply about her even though I feel I have very little in common with her. THAT to me is a sign of great writing. To write beautifully flawed human characters.

The supporting characters were all veiled in this wonderful air of mystery and confusion as Lux was attempting to figure out the mystery behind that night and even though this probably meant that I didn't connect with these characters as much, it actually somehow added to the tension in the book. All my senses were as heightened as Lux's were.

If I were to find any flaws with this book (and these are purely quibbles) it's that the pacing was not entirely perfect. The book dragged a little between the 30% and 50% mark and I would actually have liked the last 15% to have been a little more detailed. But these are minor issues. The ending was actually very beautiful and I did finish the book with my eyes glistening with tears.

A thoroughly original and incredibly emotional YA read that feels truly authentic.  
Highly recommended

**four and a half stars** rounded up to five

*\*A copy of this book was kindly provided to me by the publisher, Hachette Children's Group / Hodder Children's Books, via NetGalley in exchange for an honest review.\**

As I read an ARC please be advised that the following may not be the exact quotes in the published work but I really wanted to share these passages as I found them to be rather beautiful and to me they really encapsulate the feeling and tone of this novel:-

*"I will find the old Lux and when I do I will climb back inside her and sew myself into her skin so I never get lost again. The last time I saw her, me, properly was at the Leavers' Ball. I was wearing the shortest, reddest dress I could find. This was before colours meant what they do now. And before I got lost."*

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*"I know this is difficult, Lux. Perhaps you could just tell me the main things that are bothering you, just so I can make sure I have it all noted down correctly,' the doctor said. So I told her what I'd eventually told my mother after weeks of saying it was just the headaches while thinking I was losing my mind. That since I blacked out I feel like my head is not connected to my body, that I panic about weird things and that my senses get confused sometimes. And, if I get really strung out, colours get brighter and more intense, and it's almost as if words and sound have colour. I didn't tell her that I sometimes see words in the air, sometimes even punctuation, which makes it hard to follow what people are saying. 'I feel like I'm in a video game or a play,' I said."*

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*"My thoughts are starting to get mean; I remind myself that villains are just victims whose stories haven't yet been told. A professional told me that, like he was conveying something super meaningful and all I could think was how much Lux sounded like a villain's name."*

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*"Vanilla is an insult to some people, but some days I would give up every flavour in my body to be just vanilla."*

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*"These tropes of troubled and rescued teens should embarrass me. I should cringe at the clichés. But words are the most powerful drug, someone famous said that once, I think, and I find myself buzzing."*

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*"A constellation of bright young things, we delight in pre-show banter and buy moonshine from an illicit vendor. But, ten minutes into the actual performance, the nostalgia party ends. Without the narration of the book, all that remains is beautiful, two-dimensional people doing vile things."*

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## **Alannah Clarke says**

Thank you to NetGalley.co.uk for providing me with a free copy in exchange for an honest review.

In all honesty, I picked up this book because in the email I had received about this book, it appeared to be marketed at fans of Sylvia Plath's *The Bell Jar* which I had enjoyed. I was expecting to be left disappointed by this novel because I have found if you compare a book to *The Bell Jar* the novel ends up falling short of expectations. Early on in the book, I had forgotten about the comparison, I could see why this novel was compared to Plath's work, but this changes as the book goes deeper into the mystery aspect of the storyline.

I loved the main character and the fact she is such an unreliable narrator, this adds to the wonderful mystery of the overall plotline, the character wasn't portrayed as perfect, but to me, I think that is excellent writing and just made want to carry on with the novel.

I do have to say, the only reason I haven't given this book the full five stars is that there were problems with the pacing of the novel. Around the halfway point I found the story to be dragging slightly, and I was a little bored, but I am glad I persevered for that beautiful ending.

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## **Sarah says**

(I received an advance copy of this book for free. Thanks to Hachette Children's Group and NetGalley.)

This was a YA story about a girl who couldn't remember one night of her life after ending up in hospital.

Lux was an okay character, but I found it quite hard to connect with her.

The storyline was about Lux not knowing what had happened at a party, after waking up in hospital with no memory of the night before. We then got Lux struggling at school a bit, and struggling with her daily life, but I lost interest. I thought that the story would focus more on Lux's synaesthesia, but it didn't, and although I was interested to find out what exactly did happen (and it wasn't what I expected) it didn't really save the book for me.

The ending to this was okay, but I had really lost interest by then.

6 out of 10

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### **Tiffany Anne says**

I feel personally attacked by how fantastic the writing is. The way Ruffles has written Lux Langley's mental state throughout this novel is very jarring and potentially extremely triggering—it hurt to read this. But I adored it and there is an underline of hope and recovery.

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### **Alice-Elizabeth (marriedtobooks) says**

I read this book as part of the Spookathon reading challenge, follow me on Twitter to see daily updates of the books I read! The local YA book group that I attend received the opportunity to read and review *The Taste Of Blue Light* for the publishers. I don't normally do this but because my review on this book is incredibly long, I have posted it to my blog. It's spoiler-free and also contains a discussion section where all of the group members were sent a list of questions to answer so I answered them. It would be amazing if you could stop by my blog and read my post: <https://marriedtobooksreviewsandblog....> Thanks everyone! Alice x

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### **Liz Barnsley says**

I loved this. It was beautiful and sad but uplifting and absolutely does not go down the route you expect it to go based on the blurb – which just made it all the better.

Lux is recovering after a blackout and waking up in hospital with no memory of recent events. We join her around the time she rejoins her school and her friends – she is different, disturbed, an artist with a huge black hole threatening to swallow her, a girl who remembers the person she was but can't seem to recapture it. Her parents worry it is too soon, her friends rally round, but Lux is both there and not there as she struggles with her inner demons.

The writing is edgy, emotive and really quite wonderful. The descriptive sense of how Lux is feeling, how she is taking this journey back to herself, is completely in the moment and real. I thought the setting was inspired – the school she attends is unconventional and allows for so much exploration of the wider themes here, it was all stunningly vibrant and really gripping.

A truly excellent look at life after trauma, some of the best parts of this come after the memory returns and

we see Lux moving forward – it is, at that point, a story about how we can survive, adapt, yes even become different people altogether, when life throw us into the most horrific circumstances. How Lux reacts, how those around her do, it is all done with a delicate touch and some beautiful prose that really pulled you into that world and didn't let go.

I adored this story from the moment I met Lux until the moment I regrettably left her behind. Contemporary Young Adult Fiction at it's very best.

Highly Recommended.

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### **?Skye? says**

I received a free ebook copy of this from Netgalley. Thankyou to both Netgalley and the publisher for giving me the opportunity to read this book! My opinions are still honest and my own.

This book is for readers who like beautiful writing. This style is full of very imaginative metaphors and builds and creates ideas in a stunning way. As a book about artists, it fits the plot and subject so well and brings this story to life.

The Taste of Blue Light follows Lux, who attends Richdeane, an elite art school with a very liberal attitude. Lux lives in a world where art is very important in society. She has just suffered a traumatic incident in which she awakes after a party in hospital with severe physical and mental issues, and no idea what happened to her. We follow her as she navigates how her life has been affected by this, how her relationships with those around her change, and she progresses towards solving the mystery of how she ended up this way. Lux is a very human character, and I mean this in that she can be selfish, makes some bad decisions and can hurt those around her. She is realistic and imperfect, and I love flawed characters who aren't made out to be perfect people. Lux deals with substance issues and I think the result of this plot point was heartening to read. It isn't glossed over or forgiven. I cannot speak as to how accurate the portrayal of her mental health issues are but I think it was a convincing look at how chronic pain can affect day to day life and how repressed memories influence how she treated those around her. Speaking of those other characters, some of those were fantastic. There are some amazing female friendships in this, a great relationship with a mental health professional and an initaly rocky relationship with her parents that doesn't turn into an 'all adults are awful' trope, like what frequently seems to happen in novels of this genre. There are romances, but they're side plots and I did like one of the love interests, who was respectful and sweet. This book also shows an unsuccessful relationship, and how we realise that a person isn't right for us.

The mystery of what happened to her was well done and the resolution entirely unexpected. I loved the setting of Richdeane and the description of art. I haven't read a book with such a strong focus on art and wide variety of what art means! It includes things like cooking and writing. The conclusion of this story was perfect, with Lux's journey clearly not over, but with her being in a place where we as readers feel hope that her story will have a happy ending. Lydia Ruffles will be an author that I will be keeping a keen eye on, and while I cannot say this book entirely blew me away, it is one I will think about for a very long time and I will be waiting eagerly for new releases from this author.

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### **Miriam Smith says**

Won in the Goodreads Giveaways

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## **Kate (GirlReading) says**

I'm really not sure how I felt about this to be honest. To me, it definitely wasn't the psychological thriller it was marketed as. Yes, it had a mystery and delved into mental health but a thriller? I'm not so sure.

Although I know she was having to deal with a lot, I unfortunately didn't warm to the main character and the way she talked/acted towards others. I also wasn't the biggest fan of some of the content and descriptions from the author, which felt a little iffy in terms of mental illness at times. Having said that, the authors writing style I really enjoyed. It flowed brilliantly and very a quick and easy read. I just wasn't too much of a fan of certain phrases etc. I'm still not sure about how I felt about this, so I think I might have to come back to this review a bit later but for now, I can't say I loved it, nor did I hate it. I just don't think it was really for me personally.

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## **Bill Kupersmith says**

I loved the 1st half of this book. It is set in the most extraordinary school – a pricey independent boarding school devoted to the arts, where Lux Langley, who will turn 18 on 23rd November, is suffering from amnesia as well as synaesthesia, which causes her to have headaches coloured red. That part worked for me; last night I read some before sleep and dreamt of fire. And as a lover of stories about eccentric schools, I found Richdeane a treasure. They really do art snobbery. The teachers are called “directors” – the headmistress is the “head-director” – and the students are called “Artists”! They are expected to dress entirely in black. Lux lives in a dorm called “Dylan” (the Nobel Laureate not the Welsh poet); there’s another called “Van Sant” (whom I’d never heard of – makes movies according to Google and I’d actually seen a couple.) “Art” is literally God at Richdeane. Each day at assembly the head-director leads them in their Act of Faith: “We pledge ourselves to the will of the muses, and to the words of the greats. We give it to art and we let go.” Indeed, sometimes Lux uses “By Art” as an expletive. So I was expecting a side-splittingly funny satire on aesthetic pretentiousness. Unfortunately we have to take Lux seriously. Generically the story is not a satire, but a Bell Jar. For Lux the entire school, especially one of the directors who is also her counselor and coach, Dr. Baystone, who is not quite “a real doctor” (i.e., not a physician), and her BFs Olivia and Mei, are actually involved in treating Lux’s condition, and trying to get her to remember what happened last summer when she was interning at a gallery, went to a leaving party and apparently overdid it, and found herself in hospital the next day with no memory of how and why she got there. From a therapeutic POV I find it ethically dodgy to subject a patient to a course of treatment under false pretenses, but when we find out what really happened, I was so incredulous that the treatment scarcely mattered. At exactly 2/3 Lux started remembering and I stopped believing. I’ll give nothing away, but simply reveal that it was something that Lux would have been constantly and publically aware of whether she could remember it or not. (Even tho’ her major source of news seems to be Hello!) Otherwise, despite the extremely artsy setting, *The Taste of Blue Light* was pretty typical of the Bell Jar genre, with a very self-centred main character and a manipulative somewhat devious therapist. We also have Lux having relationships with a couple of boys – a sexy but uncaring sculptor and a puppy-doggish painter. It is also amusing that Lux ends up working in a quite different kind of “gallery” than Richdeane would prepare her for. Or maybe not. After the big revelation at 2/3, the ending seemed pretty “meh” but I skimmed to find out where Lux was at 20 and it looks predictable. As for me, I think it’s time I read Jennifer Dawson’s *The Ha-Ha* (1962) once more. For me it represents the epitome of the genre.



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## **Karen Barber says**

Thanks to NetGalley for providing me with an ARC of this captivating read.

Initially, Lux was not a character to feel empathy with. Her unwillingness to engage with things and people made her hard to care about. The environment in which she cloisters herself is alien to many of us.

Yet as the story progressed I found myself falling under a spell. Desperate to know what happened, we do get answers, and they are far more topical than we might expect.

This is one best to know little about before reading. It is not immediately seeking to attract your attention, but it sneaks up on you.

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## **Greyson [Use Your Words] says**

*Thank you to Netgalley for providing me an advanced reader copy in exchange for my honest review.*

Everywhere around the world, all born under the same sky, alarms ring in hearts and people bleed.

The Taste of Blue Light is a story about a girl called Lux who attends a boarding school for artists. She loves to write and party too hard, and take recreational drugs. Lux lives the kind of life a lot of teenage artists dream of. She's been looking forward to her final year before she gets to go out into the real world but a little sad to leave everything she knows behind. She loves her life.. until she wakes up in the hospital with no recollection of what happened. Her memories are erased. What's left is a Lux who is empty and lost, who gets migraines, her sight and dreams are sometimes filled with red, and she has no idea why or how her life took such a huge turn.

***My mother used to say my problem is that I can't decide whether I'm whiskey or chamomile. It's actually more like I don't know whether I'm the lamb or the slaughter.***

This story was so beautifully written, if a little pretentious. But I really did love the writing and reading Lux's story so much. It was sad, damn right heartbreaking but it was also filled with love and understanding as well as, in my opinion, a very good representation of PTSD.

Lux when we first meet her is fun loving, running a muck at a boarding school while her parents live in Singapore. She's lighting backyard fireworks, experiencing sex for the first time and feeling melancholy that she only has one more year left of all of this.

But then she wakes up and red is where her memories should be. She remembers that she went out one night but nothing else. She thinks she's partied too hard, taken too many drugs, but this nagging feeling keeps nipping at her mind that something happened, something awful and now all she feels is lost.

Lux sees all sorts of professionals to try and remember, her parents are back living with her before she starts school again but all they do is fight and Lux convinces them to let her go back to school because she'll find old Lux in the halls, she'll be fixed. Life is never that easy though.

***She turns to pick up her bag and then turns back to me, holding out an origami bird.***

***"It's a swan," she says. "Serene on the surface but paddling like hell under water. Like you."***

**"What?"**

**"Takes one to know one."**

Her friends Mei and Olivia are so understanding and supportive of her, weathering the storm of nightmares and the ghost of their friend, and they're not the only ones.

She makes another friend in Georgia and her school therapist Dr Baystone is patient and not at all pushy of her recovery. Allowing Lux to rediscover what happened mostly on her own.

She also meets Cal, the new kid and they quickly fall for each other and start a relationship. Cal is kind and sensitive and without being the 'guy who saves the girl' he walks along side Lux in her recovery without trying to 'fix' her which is a breath of fresh air from the same old trope I have seen too many damn times in books that battle any kind of mental illness.

***It hurts. The way only the truth can: completely.***

When it's revealed what happened to Lux I was genuinely surprised, it wasn't something I was expecting. This book already was dealing with the sensitive subject of PTSD and then adding more to that could have easily been too much for the the author to handle but Ruffles handled both sensitive subjects very well in my eyes.

After the reveal the recovery process isn't rushed. Lux doesn't find her memories and then goes straight back to normal Lux, the recovery is a long process before and after the memories come back.

Lux isn't fixed by the end either its very clear at the end of the book that she still has a long way to go and I really loved that it wasn't all tied up neatly in a bow at the end.

That's not what happens with trauma, even when you think you're better and healed, even when you think you've dealt with all the feelings and have locked it up in a cupboard to never have to deal with again.

Trauma slips under the door, it hides in place you never knew it affected, it affects how you talk, behave, the way you are with others. It's always there, it changes you. No matter how hard you try to go back to the old you, you never really get there and I think in a lot of ways that's a good thing.

The writing is so beautiful and has such keen commentary on the world we have found ourselves in recently that I thought I would include a few of my favorites.

*I'm not sad. That's too mall. A tiny word.*

*'And see if you can find something else to wear - you look like you're going to a funeral. Shit, sorry, Lux.'*

*"That's OK. I didn't have a funeral."*

(view spoiler)

*I know it will hurt when I miss him, but I choose not contaminating him.*

*Jack is a human grenade with a propensity for pulling out his own pin.*

If you're looking for a book that tackles tough subjects well, or just want to read a beautifully written contemporary novel then I highly recommend giving this book a go!

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?Blog?Instagram?Twitter?Tumblr?

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**E L E A N O R (bookishcourtier) says**

3.5

**Heck I remember ZERO about this.** I really should have reviewed this sooner, because it wasn't that memorable and I can already feel the details sliding from my mind. I remember none of the characters names

but Lux's, and only because her name was kind of weird. I remember kind of liking it and enjoying it but not really much else. I shall try my best in this review, but I apologise in advance if this review turns out to be extremely...vague.

## THOUGHTS

- I think the setting was slightly weird. It was basically this boarding school kind of thing but totally dedicated to the arts? But it was really abstractly described and they had all these weird mottos and stuff and I wasn't sold? Though I do have nice memories of reading this book by a really pretty river, and keep picturing that as the scenery and getting confused. The writing was pretty nice though! It was quite abstract in places which sometimes made the story hard to understand, but I think it worked well with the whole story because Lux had amnesia.

- Seriously though, this felt so much like *We Were Liars* in a lot of ways! The general plot was really similar, and even though the setting was quite different, I still felt that other story really present in my mind whilst reading this. It is hard to say how without spoiling BOTH books, but here: (view spoiler) I did find the "reveal" pretty satisfying, which is what I need in a book like this, but the ending really dragged. I really did not need that random "part two" tacked on the end. The ending was super anticlimactic after the reveal and I got bored.

- I didn't really like Lux before or after the "event" She just wasn't really my type of person beforehand, so I couldn't relate or find anything in common, aside from the fact that she liked to write. But after the "event" she didn't even do that anymore, and I think I would have liked her more if she had. I did like the female friendships and how supportive her friends were (shh don't ask me their names) but the side characters weren't really that memorable - they felt like they were just there for Lux to be horrible to the whole time. There was also just a lot of drugs and drinking and Lux was STILL doing that by the end of the book. She really had no character arc.

**This was a little enjoyable, but a little bit underwhelming.** I liked some elements, and I would pick up another of this author's book, but ultimately this wasn't my cup of tea. I didn't really like the main character. The story was engaging until after the "reveal" and then it could have been cut down by about fifty pages. The whole "part two" was super unnecessary. In the end, it was just kind of "meh".

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## Jen says

This novel started out incredibly strongly, both in the way it was written and in its opening scene of the passion of young artists.

Although the rest of the novel is written just as lyrically the story loses traction pretty quickly as plot is lost in decorative descriptions of feelings and thoughts of the main character Lux.

Though I was intrigued to find out what had happened to the protagonist - the journey to that discovery mostly fell flat through one dimensional events meant to set her back and cause a reaction. When events finally do come to fruition it was one of the biggest disappoints. The discovery only helped to distance me further from the story and the characters instead of drawing me nearer.

Although they weren't given too much substance there was something I really liked about all the subsidiary characters, from Lux's two best friends, to her parents and her therapist. Also Loved the idea of the kids who grew up too quickly as they were taught to give into the arts, and the adults who encouraged them to do so.

Overall by the end I wasn't quite sure what the conclusion was supposed to mean, how things were resolved - if they were resolved, and what the point of it all was. The heart of the story felt misplaced.

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