



Dipped, Stripped, and Dead

Elise Hyatt (Pseudonym) , Sarah A. Hoyt

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Dyce (short for Candyce) Dare never thought she'd end up twenty-nine and divorced, with a toddler to raise, an ex who "forgets" his child support, and a diet consisting mostly of pancakes.

To make ends meet, Dyce takes a chance and starts up Daring Finds, a furniture refinishing business. But finding things to refinish is tough - especially when Dyce goes Dumpster diving for discarded furniture and uncovers a gelatinous-looking corpse. Turns out the body was immersed in a vat of lye - a technique used for refinishing furniture - making Dyce a prime suspect.

Now, in order to clear her good - and thanks to her parents, slightly absurd - name, Dyce has to play private eye. But solving a murder isn't child's play, especially when the next victim just might be *her*...

Dipped, Stripped, and Dead Details

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From Reader Review Dipped, Stripped, and Dead for online ebook

Carbonel says

Great new series

I'm more of an SF and non-fiction reader than a mystery buff, but the mysteries I love: by Dick Francis, Ngaio Marsh, or M.C. Beaton; all have the same combination of distinctive - and appealing, - authorial voice, a really interesting setting, and a lead character I want to root for. I'm adding "Elise Hyatt" to that list of must-have authors.

Heidi J. says

Fun, quirky craft mystery. The language didn't exactly meet my standards (there was a running joke with the 2 year old swearing that was funny the first time but got old) and the resolution to the mystery was no surprise but I enjoyed the characters quite a bit

Leslie says

Candyce "Dyce" Dare is a young divorcee with a toddler and a "barely making it" business refinishing furniture. She is unconventional and hard headed. Her financial struggles lead her to dumpster dive for furniture to fix and resell. In the beginning of the book she finds a nice little table and a corpse. One of the detectives who responds to Dyce's 911 call is extremely attractive and seems interested in her. The budding romance, that she's fairly oblivious to, is handled lightly as is the murder mystery and the break-ins at her apartment. Dyce has some issues and lets her ex take advantage of her. She does some stupid things throughout the book, like put herself squarely in harms way just because she thinks she's tough. She does the opposite of what her best friend Ben advises and what Detective Wolfe makes her swear to. This is irritating and made me dislike her. She also purposely put her child in a dangerous position just to prove a point. Stupidity and irrational behavior do not a good series make. Not sure if the interesting info on furniture refinishing can redeem a dummy heroine.

Katherine P says

This book had way too much going on to fit into the 280 pages. Ben and Cas were likable and interesting. Dyce would've been likable and interesting if there hadn't been so much drama. Between the fact that all she ate was pancakes (which is repeated regularly), her crazy parents, her weird name and how she got it, her annoying ex-husband and his even more annoying new wife, her son's selective mutism, her ratty apartment, her crappy car, her dislike of Ben's crazy boyfriend and her increasingly stupid to live actions which by the end pass TSTL and go straight to plain moronic it was just way too much. The plot and the important characters got lost in the overabundance of detail. It's too bad because I liked the foundation of the story. I may pick up another Hyatt book but it won't be a first choice.

Robert says

A wonderfully light and fun read!

For a "craft" mystery this was an amazingly fun and light read. Entertaining with just enough "oomph" to the mystery aspect that the obvious solution isn't but the answer isn't far fetched. Make no mistake, if you're expecting a mystery like the Tempe Brennan novels you'll be bitterly disappointed. But if you want a fun story and a casually diverting read with interesting characters then I would give this one a chance.

Cynthia says

A fun book made less fun by the irritating lack of common sense and wrongheadedness of the main character, Dyce Dare. She was 30 going on 13. I may read one of the author's later books to see if Dyce shows any growth. Two and a half stars.

Lora says

I was in the mood for some light reading, and this was a good choice: interesting characters, a little romance and a mystery that kept you guessing. I even gasped out loud! Nice cover-art, too. I'll be picking up book 2 the next time I'm need something light.

Jamie says

Dyce is trying to make ends meet as a single mother being stiffed on child support payments by rescuing and refinishing old furniture under the cloak of Daring Finds. But she finds a bit more than she expected after a round of dumpster diving leads to the stiff of two rival restorers.

For a New Year post I'm working on a list of 'put it down's and 'pick it up's, listing the things that, to me, make or break a book. You can probably guess why I'm mentioning that at the beginning of a review.

Holy shit what happened? The author is witty, and her character's introspective moments are deep and enjoyable, but holy shit. I started this review when I got to chapter 6 and it's already committed 4 'put it down's. (The character's name is a pun, but it was meant as a pun and has nothing to do with her job and isn't supposed to be funny, so she gets a pass on this sin.)

The first thing you notice about this book is the author's turn of phrase. Elise Hyatt has a clever hand and is great at telling anecdotes in a character's inner voice. She'd probably do well as a biographer or autobiographer. But she is neither. She is a mystery writer. And five pages in you're still being spoon-fed the main character's history and it's a lot less charming. It's all in first person so on page 1 we get the main

character's childhood. On page 3, her son and ex-husband's names. On page 4 we learn what she's doing at present and what her best friend is named. She finds the dead body on page 9. But we have no idea who the hell we're following and learning about until page 16, and by that point it's already gotten hard to care.

Nothing you learn here is relevant to the plot, and anything that is could be learned much better another way. Either Ms. Hyatt was trying to fluff it up to fill the pages or she never learned 'show, don't tell'. I hope it was the former because it's terrible to see such a good turn of phrase wasted on this mess. I counted the dialogue from pages 1-34 and it came up to 185 spoken sentences, which doesn't sound that bad until you pick the book up and read it, only to discover that the vast majority of the sentences are between one and four words long, and several are baby babble. So I went a step farther and counted the words themselves and compared them to the word length of a random full page of writing, and it came up to 2.8 pages of dialogue, leaving us 31.2 pages of description and backstory.

Actually, I'm almost positive this was all stuck in later as filler, because she repeats herself nearly verbatim pretty quickly:

'...Ben was six-three and built like an assault tank...'
(Elise Hyatt, Dipped, Stripped, and Dead, p.22)

'...Ben is six foot three and built like a Sherman tank.'
(Elise Hyatt, Dipped, Stripped, and Dead, p.33)

And for what I said before about her character's quiet moments being captivating? It's always wonderful to read about a character doing or loving something the writer also does or reads. Research can capture the reality of it (such as Meg Langslow's blacksmithing in the *Meg Langslow* series), but it can't convey the love and meditation of it (like Sophie Winston's cooking in the *Domestic Diva* series). Ms. Hyatt *gets* furniture restoration. When Dyce gets to work inspecting and cleaning up her find it's methodical, peaceful, and tells a lot about how this character works. But devoting an entire 13 page chapter to it is all a bit much.

Another sin: doing something stupid for stupid reasons in an important situation. She arms herself when she discovers her friend and son aren't in the house and carefully inspects the place for intruders. After the pair are found safe, they discover evidence of an actual intruder by way of her son's stuffed animal hung by the neck from a curtain rod and a meat cleaver stuck in her hacked apart table. She handwaves it away and pretends it was nothing to worry about because, I wish to God I was joking, that antique table she found tucked into a dumpster with the dead body and hid from the police might be valuable and she'll be damned if she lets the cops come confiscate it, or leaves the house empty for anyone to break in and steal it from her. Then her friend offers his own place for the mother and son to stay and we're treated to a page and a half of description of his apartment. We don't *care* about his fucking apartment. We're not *in* his fucking apartment. We're in *your* apartment, and someone has broken in, ransacked your kitchen knives, and stuck a meat cleaver in your table. There should be more important things on your mind *than the layout of your friend's fucking loft*.

But what's this? Is she going to avoid another 'put it down'? Is she actually going to do it?

'...my first reaction was that he was absolutely the ugliest man I've ever seen. (...) It was more, I thought as I looked up at him, that his features didn't seem to work together, like each was slightly at odds with the others.'

Fuck, she's actually going to do it! She's doing it!

'And in that moment, as I thought that, something happened. In between one blink and the other, one breath and the next, the man I was looking at went from being the ugliest man I'd ever seen to being the best-looking.'

Fuck, no, no don't do it-

'Overwhelmingly handsome- beautiful really, with an almost inhuman beauty that couldn't help but cause a reaction- just looking at him was kind of like being hit on the head with a mallet. All thought stopped, your mouth dropped open, and you couldn't quite remember how to speak.'

(Elise Hyatt, Dipped, Stripped, and Dead, p. 14)

...That may actually have been the absolute worst intro of a romantic lead I've ever read. Goodreads tells me I've gone through over 1500 books. *Worst. Ever.*

I can't believe I've finished this book, to be honest. I wanted to stop after that description of the cop. But I figured, Ms. Hyatt's put so much effort into screwing her readers over, it'd be impolite not to see what else she's got planned.

The verdict? As the story goes on the backstory lessens up a bit but you'll still be conditioned to skip paragraphs when it sounds like it's about to start up. The solution is uninteresting and the murderer acts like a silly, moustache-twirling, train-tracks-tying black and white villain. And it breaks my heart because what was good was done really good. But in the end there's just no reason to move on to book 2 with the series.

Patrick Barnes says

Murder mystery or romantic comedy?

The characters are written unevenly. They aren't quirky though they are meant to be. The main character is the messiest of them all. She spends the most of the book: rejecting help from a friend; not sharing vital information with the detective investigating the murder; drools over the detective; repeats to herself how independent she is; puts herself and 3 yr old in deadly danger with very little regret or acknowledgement of the consequences of her recklessness. Fourteen yr old acting out is how she behaves.

The detective trying to date a person of interest in a week old murder investigation, is over the top. It's very romance novel but all it introduces is a second male to come to her rescue. He overlooks her interference and kisses her to convince her that he's upset? He's overwhelmed by her quirkiness and spends the whole book trying to get her juices flowing rather than doing his job. Fortunately for him, she does his job for him.

The MC might be worth reading if there weren't a murder at the heart of the story. Her lifestyle and her concerns about rent and food were real world. Her murder investigation and flirtation were not.

The writing was OK and the furniture restoration was a fun backdrop for a story. The murder mystery, itself kept me reading after I lost interest in the main character.

I won't bother with the rest of the series. This series seems to be headed romantic crazy town.

Victoria Gaile says

This was an odd one. Lately I've been going through these cozies like candy, too fast to bother entering here. But for some reason, this was a very easy book for me to put down and go do something else for a while, so it lasted longer.

I liked almost everything about it: the main character's personality, her gay best friend, her crazy readaholic parents (I could see myself as them in some alternate universe...), her kid, her refinishing work, her crush on Officer Wolfe, the style of dialogue.

The one thing that annoyed me was that the main character was **stupid** in idiotically persisting to investigate things without telling anyone where she was going, withholding information from the police, etc etc. Basically, everything she did to advance the plot, she was stupid about. On the other hand, if she hadn't been stupid, there wouldn't have been much mystery going on... but most authors manage to give their investigators more reasonable motivations, a better sense of self-preservation, or some constraints that actually force them into taking chances.

But other than the fact that I kept yelling "Oh don't be an IDIOT, woman!!" in the back of my mind, I really enjoyed the book. Book 2 is sitting in my library bag ready to start tomorrow.

Erin L says

Not a fan. I can only hope it got better, but I read about 120 pages and gave up. I got tired of her unique name, her kid's unique name (Enoch? Really?), her ridiculousness - hey look, her bestest friend in the whole world is rich, but she's got to keep evidence in a murder rather than turning it over to the police because she can't afford to feed her kid. Because her ex (with a stupid nickname she insists on continuing throughout the book) apparently doesn't pay her child support.

Oh right, and she refuses to accept suggestions and common sense because someone else suggested it to her. And her toddler knows the alphabet, but can't speak. Because he's ridiculously intelligent. Apparently a fluke of nature because neither of his parents are.

And, how does a cop afford a really pricey restaurant to take her to on what appears to be a first date, even though she's too stupid to realize it.

It amounts to a main character who is too stupid to live and I've read enough books like that.

Dorina says

This is the first in a series and a great start to a new series. I really enjoyed reading this one and did not want to put it down. The main character, Dyce, was smart and funny. Her son made me laugh. I love her relationship with her bestie, Ben. I won't give away the story except that it starts with her dumpster diving. (I've been known to peek myself and always am out on garbage day to see what I can discover.) Looking

forward to the next in the series.

MomIsReading says

I liked this new series. The main character is saucy and independent. It makes me want to go out and try to refinish a piece of furniture.

Elise says

Despite my desire to like an author who shares my first name, this was a tremendously formulaic mystery novel blended with the first third of a romance novel. I found the mystery itself predictable, the characters two dimensional, and the author's style unreliable at best. Unfortunately, she had a few moments of pleasing wit, which made it that much harder to write the book off as not worth reading. Alas, overall, it was a waste of time.

Elizabeth says

Fun murder mystery with the interesting angle of furniture refinishing thrown in. Passion and romance are dangerous when carried out near vats of lye.
