

Drained

Marc Daniel Acriche

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In the dystopian young adult novel Drained, a resistance group works to overthrow a burgeoning dictatorship.

In Marc Daniel Acriche's apocalyptic novel *Drained*, a high school senior gambles her life to free New York from the grips of a brainwashing military organization.

In 2048, Manhattan is in dire straits. Storms ravaged the island, leaving some neighborhoods in shambles, while others face random electrical blackouts. Casey is one of the fortunate people living uptown in a comfortable apartment and studying at an upscale prep school. When one of her friends goes missing, Casey and her best friend Jennifer go to blackout-prone downtown to look for clues.

When two men pop out of an unmarked van, Casey's father appears and whisks her to safety. Casey's father, Joe, is a member of the Resistance, which seeks to stamp out the Independent Coalition Party's hold on New York. The ICP target Casey, who agrees to have a tracking device implanted and allows herself to be captured. She hopes to ascertain the location of the ICP's brainwashing facility.

The severity of the culture that has taken hold of New York is hidden from view for much of the novel due, in part, to Casey's social status. While Casey has some political opinions about the ICP, the world at large seems unimportant to her, resulting in an incomplete sense of all that's beyond Manhattan. Superstorms and difficult travelling between states are hinted at, but such details are never expanded upon.

As Casey explores Manhattan, the novel's interesting cast grows, and its world building expands. She meets sheltered students and people who manage to hide from the ICP. Several of these figures undergo dramatic transitions, including Casey herself, who begins as a naïve and protected girl, but becomes a capable fighter who takes direct control of her life and faces down the ICP.

The prose is balanced, trading between thrilling chases and instances of humor that come because of Casey's perspective. But while the first half of the novel is plotted with care, following along as Casey's world is upended, and as she becomes trapped within the ICP facility, its second half, following her escape, is rushed. It features a surprising romantic connection with a Resistance operative that provides a moment of calm, but that adds little else to the book. The book's conclusion reads like an inevitable meeting of opposing forces.

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JOHN M. MURRAY (June 12, 2021)

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