

The background features a complex network of white nodes connected by thin white lines, set against a gradient background that transitions from a deep purple at the top to a bright pink at the bottom. The nodes are scattered across the frame, with some forming distinct geometric shapes like triangles and polygons. The overall aesthetic is modern and digital.

# Caraval

Written by Stephanie Garber

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Published by mckeonandassociates

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Caraval

# Caraval

By Stephanie Garber

## Caraval Series

Remember, it's only a game!

## Caraval Book 3

Scarlett Dragna has never left the tiny island where she and her sister, Tella, live with their powerful, and cruel, father. Now Scarlett's father has arranged a marriage for her, and Scarlett thinks her dreams of seeing Caraval—the faraway, once-a-year performance where the audience participates in the show—are over.

## Caraval Book

But this year, Scarlett's long-dreamt-of invitation finally arrives. With the help of a mysterious sailor, Tella whisks Scarlett away to the show. Only, as soon as they arrive, Tella is kidnapped by Caraval's mastermind organizer, Legend. It turns out that this season's Caraval revolves around Tella, and whoever finds her first is the winner.

## Caraval Movie

Scarlett has been told that everything that happens during Caraval is only an elaborate performance. Nevertheless she becomes enmeshed in a game of love, heartbreak, and magic. And whether Caraval is real or not, Scarlett must find Tella before the five nights of the game are over or a dangerous domino effect of consequences will be set off, and her beloved sister will disappear forever.

## Caraval Book 2

Welcome, welcome to Caraval! Beware of getting swept too far away.

\*record scratch\*

\*freeze frame\*

Yup, that's me. Scarlett Dragna, main character of the YA hit Caraval. You're probably wondering how I ended up in this situation. If every single thing that happened in this whole book was anything to go by, it was through a combination of pointless lying, constant embarrassment, obsession with Some Guy, a big act of caring about a younger sister despite very little indication of that being true, unrelenting drama about a dumb wedding, repetitive interactions, weird descri

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(insert elegant bow here) And that, my dear friends, is my Scarlett Dragna impression. Thank you. Yes, thank you. Oh, please, stop with the standing ovation! I'm just like all of you. Except I possess such bitterness and have such a grasp of the future that I wrote a character description at the 25% mark, and god did it hold up.

Yup. You guessed it. I didn't like my most anticipated book of the year.

<https://emmareadstoomuch.wordpress.co...>

(What a surprise! you probably all chant in unison.)

I almost felt guilty about writing a negative review about this book - because it's about to be damn negative - but then I remembered it's THIS BOOK'S FAULT. It marketed its damn self as a young adult The Night Circus. It must take some serious goddamn gonads to look at a masterpiece, essentially magic with a front and back cover, and go, "Yeah. My book is just like that." Spoiler alert: it's really, really not.

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Oh, God, this review is going to be long. My bullet point list of notes alone is long. And I am putting away fruit snacks like nobody's business, so I've got enough sugar in my system to sustain a lengthy burst of anger. Strap in, everybody! (Note from later: I sugar-crashed when I was almost done this review. But it did last me through most of it.)

## THE SETTING

All I want is a good setting. All those times I said I just want a good character to love and settle down with, I think - and relish this rare gift of a moment - I think I was wrong. I think I care most about settings. (Hence why books with magnificent settings get five star ratings no matter what.) And thus, it is my curse to eternally pick up every book that is compared to *The Night Circus*.

This book does not have a good setting. It's confusing: everything that seems solid is gone back on later. Nothing is real. That doesn't lead to a good setting. But I'll talk more about the constant, piece of sh\*t cop-outs later in this review. It lacks the strong descriptions that a setting literally needs. It doesn't feel magical at all. (More on that later, too.) But above all, it's not goddamn GROUNDED.

Haha. That GIF made me feel a little better. Thank you, my favorite person of all time forever, Bo Burnham. Anyway, as I was saying. This. Is. Not. Grounded. In Round 14 of 3947234829 why *The Night Circus* is better than this book and the latter should never have been compared, TNC takes place in our world. Yeah. The author (presumably) realized 1) maybe we need a little bit of magic! And 2) she couldn't create one of the greatest settings of all time while also establishing a fantasy world. It would have weakened the whole book.

But Stephanie Garber did NOT make the same choice. Instead, we're unceremoniously dumped into a world where there are islands and colonizing empires and that CLASSIC YA trope of using clunky terms to differentiate the world from the real one (like *Hot Season*, because they don't have WORDS FOR THE SEASONS). Even more fun, during this book characters travel between countries/colonies/islands/empires/I have no idea, and the reader has NO GODDAMN CLUE WHAT IS GOING ON.

Alright, I think I've talked about the setting for too long. I see that now. But this is an UNFORGIVABLE OFFENSE, OK?

## THE CHARACTERS

Weâ€™re introduced to a worldâ€™s worth of characters here, and this book achieves quite a feat - they all manage to be either flat, boring, or both! Yaaaaay! Iâ€™m totally ready to try to pretend to feel emotionally connected to these goons for 400 pages!!

First: Scarlett. Cannot believe we were trapped inside the head of the most boring character of all time throughout what was supposed to be a suspenseful thrill ride! (But, obviously, was not.) Sheâ€™s easily embarrassed, obsessed with propriety, falls in pretty much instalove with Julian because heâ€™s hot. Lies all the time because poor widdle gal is embarrassed of something or other about herself. Super weak. Constantly questioning her own reasoning and letting others make decisions for her. Tries to act like sheâ€™s a protective older sister, but, speaking as a protective older sister, she doesnâ€™t give much of a sh\*t about family when sheâ€™s staring into Julianâ€™s eyes or literally sucking his fingers.

But then we get into a whole different type of characters: Those who, by the end, we know NOTHING ABOUT. Tella, Julian, Legend. Weâ€™re given descriptions of them that are gone back on, returned to, and gone back on again. Nothing is real. The whole thing is confusing and an absolute waste of energy. I came SO GODDAMN CLOSE to DNFing this book because it has about 100 twists and none of them make sense. I wanted to shake myself out of a nightmare. What the hell was going on for 400 pages?!

Beyond that, theyâ€™re boring and I donâ€™t want to talk about them. And so were the â€œvillains.â€• Scarlett and Tellaâ€™s dad is literally ruthless for no reason. His wife left him and now he plays psychological games of abuse with his daughters. Thereâ€™s a moment where he essentially tries to get his daughterâ€™s fiancÃ© to rape her. And for what reason? It makes no sense. No sense at all. He slaps a random girl across the face at one point, murders some random dude. I donâ€™t know what excuse to make for that except that this book is sloppy.

## THE PLOT

Word to the wise...if you havenâ€™t read this book, you may want to skip this section. Even the stuff I donâ€™t mark as spoilers may be somewhat spoilery. Iâ€™ll try, kind of.

So this book centers on Caraval, the supposedly wonderful setting Iâ€™ve already moped about for way too long. Caraval attracts a bunch - well, an unknown number of people, and is supposed to be a scavenger-hunt-style game. Somehow, though, in spite of the bajillion people who actually give a sh\*t competing against her, Scarlett just stumbles into the goddamn clues.

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Hereâ€™s my world famous (Iâ€™ve become famous since the beginning of this review, right?) Scarlett impression, coming back to show you what following her through this shindig feels like. â€œOh, this terrible poem-slash-cheat sheet I was unceremoniously given says I have to â€œearnâ€ the next clue! Itâ€™s probably just this thing I randomly picked up along my travels with zero fanfare! Or maybe it has something to do with a situation I just stumbled into! Doesnâ€™t matter which choice I make, somehow itâ€™ll be manipulated into being the right one!â€• Where are the stakes?!

I also feel like 80% of this is just us listening to boring old Scarlett being like, â€œOmg, I think Julian is lying to me. Whatever shall I do?! I donâ€™t trust him!!! I just want to kiss his face off!!!â€• Etc, etc. And despite spending ALL OF HER TIME with him, sheâ€™s never just like:

(view spoiler)[And when Scarlettâ€™s piece of shit dad shows up with her fiancÃ© to like, punch her in the stomach until she says sheâ€™ll make babies or whatever, she and luhhhhhverboy have the DUMBEST REACTION. They get caught in a poor widdle thunderstorm, stop to make out for somewhere between 90 minutes and 7 hours, and get caught by the Dynamic Duo of Bad Charactersâ€™ despite being about 1 f\*cking yard away from an entrance to a hidden tunnel system. An entrance they knew about all along! I wish they both died. (hide spoiler)]

(view spoiler)[Also: two deaths, neither real, both anticlimactic and annoying. Not. A. Fan. Thatâ€™s literally just a ploy to make it seem like your dumb book has the emotional depth it strives for. WHICH IT ABSOLUTELY DOESNâ€™T. (hide spoiler)]

And this book is just one cop out after another. Weird choice to write a supposed â€œhigh fantasyâ€• book without wanting to define your world at all! Everything that is said definitively is gone back on, so many conflicting descriptions of Caraval are given that I couldnâ€™t summarize them if I tried, and on top of all that, we donâ€™t even get answers at the Big Reveal.

## LANGUAGE

This book is written...weirdly. For one thing, Scarlett, in order to remind us of her special snowflake status, sees emotion in COLOR. It is straight up so annoying. Here are a handful of my least favorite instances, for your reading horror enjoyment.

1. â€œShe could see the sting of her rejection in shades of stormy blue, ghosting over his heart like sad morning mist."
2. â€œPeriwinkle curiosityâ€• (I donâ€™t know why I hate that one so much. I just really do.)
3. â€œIt would have been a mistake to kiss him, yet she felt â€œdisappointed. It came in cool shades of forget-me-not blue, which wrapped around her like evening fog, making her feel hidden enough to acknowledge that she wanted to experience more of Caravalâ€™s pleasures than she would ever have

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admitted out loud.â€•

Did you notice anything besides how irritating that quirk is? Numbers 1 and 3 are pretty much the DAMN SAME. What the hell?!

The language in this book isnâ€™t always AWFUL, itâ€™s just...weird. Every sentence is very overwrought. Like, not everything has to have figurative language. Hereâ€™s my favorite example: The worst poem I have ever, ever read is in this book. And Iâ€™m an English major who hates poetry. Would you like to read it?

"This girl was last seen with Legend.  
If you catch her, you shall catch him as well.  
Of course, you may have to venture through Hell.  
But if you succeed you may find yourself rich.  
This yearâ€™s winner will be granted one wish."

I do have to give this book some props, because this is the first time I have ever had to shut a book for 90 seconds in order to hysterically laugh. No one ever told me that the word â€œrichâ€• rhymes with â€œwishâ€•! Hahahaha. This poem should be used to teach the importance of using meter.

## GENERAL STUPIDITY

I havenâ€™t had the absolute privilege of writing one of these sections in a while! Itâ€™s like a homecoming. An unpleasant, unwanted homecoming. Like if my home was a festering swamp, or a city sewer system.

Hereâ€™s one beautiful example - seriously, itâ€™s like a gift from the reviewing gods: â€œThen she did her best to explain the truth about death and Caraval. Tella didnâ€™t know the particulars as to how it worked. It was one of those things that people didnâ€™t really talk about.â€• See what I mean?! Instead of the author coming up with an actual defined magic system, she just says â€œOh, um...well the character doesnâ€™t know. Thereâ€™s that!â€• The world has no definition and neither does the magic. In other words, some of the sloppiest fantasy Iâ€™ve ever had the privilege to read.

Plus, thereâ€™s a lot of weird stuff going on with hooking up with your family membersâ€™ sloppy seconds. I donâ€™t want to talk about it because Iâ€™m grossed the f\*ck out. I just want to let everyone know Iâ€™m SUPER not a fan.

Thereâ€™s also a fun moment where Scarlett lectures her sister on how â€œYou canâ€™t be in love with someone you just met,â€• even though a) she fell in luurve with Julian in less than 5 days and b) she was planning on marrying someone sheâ€™d never met, and thought she could tell he was a good



## Caraval Trilogy

I feel the same way about Caraval as I did about The Star-Touched Queen last year. In fact, many of my comments are the same, so if you enjoyed that book then it's probable you will like this one also.

Caraval is a fantasy without world-building or significant character development. It relies on its dreamy descriptions, purple prose, and a heavy helping of romance to make it dazzle. To take a quote from my review of The Star-Touched Queen, "if you buy into these metaphors, put on your prose-tinted glasses and let yourself get drunk on the glittering descriptions, I suppose you might be able to ignore..." that's literally how I feel about this.

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It is about two sisters - Scarlett and Tella - who live on some random island in the middle of random world X with their abusive father who wants to marry Scarlett off to a count she's never met. Caraval is, as it sounds, a carnival-like game on another random island. People go there to play and if they win, they get a wish. The mysterious Caraval master is a guy called Legend, who Scarlett has been writing to for years, but he has now finally replied - and sent three tickets for Scarlett, Tella and Scarlett's fiance. Upon arrival at the island, Tella goes missing and it soon becomes apparent that finding her is all a part of the game. Scarlett must solve the clues and find her sister before Caraval is over.

For one thing, this is a writing style that never appeals to me. So many metaphors and similes that I know are supposed to be evocative and exciting, but they're nonsensical. Phrases like this:

“It smelled like the middle of the night.”

“He tasted like midnight and wind.”

“Tella’s expression fell, like a doll Scarlett had dropped.”

I understand that some readers like this kind of mysterious, weird writing, but it just pulls me right out of the story. I'm sat there thinking "how the hell does something TASTE LIKE MIDNIGHT?" What does it even mean that Tella's expression fell like a doll that Scarlett dropped? Does it mean that Tella is like a doll being dropped (i.e. unhappy doll?) or is the author equating the downwards turn of her expression with the downwards fall of a doll? Or neither - it just sounds good?

And here, have some more:

“Something about him made her feel perilous shades of silky black.”

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“The world tasted like lies and ashes when Scarlett woke.”

“Something acidic and moldy and burnt bubbled up through Scarlett’s throat - the taste of death.”

Let’s forget for a second that death now has a “taste” - is the author just listing random words that sound cool? Think about it. How can something taste acidic AND moldy AND burnt? I just don't believe that good writing is collecting as many exciting, descriptive words as possible and shoving them all together, regardless of whether they make any sense.

But whatever. That's just taste for the writing style. I personally thought the story was lacking too, unless you are seeking more romance and descriptions of male muscles than actual fantasy and mystery. From the very beginning, Scarlett goes on and on about the gorgeous men around her - Julian and Dante - often forgetting that her sister is missing because she is so caught up in her own romantic ambitions. And, of course, when Julian is seen talking with another girl, said girl is described as "some tart in a bar"; in comparison to Scarlett who blushes every time Julian looks at her.

He had the sort of profile meant for sculptors and painters. Full lips, strong jaw, coal-dark eyes sheltered by thick, dark brows.

Do you think that she means "sculptures" and "paintings" instead? Or is it a stereotype I don't know about that artists are supposed to have a certain sort of profile? Anyway...

I found so much of this book unsatisfying. I gave it an extra star because it remained interesting enough for me to read to the end, but there's not much more than a flowery romance contained within these pages. The mysteries and reveals are not particularly exciting, and there's a poorly-executed end moment where a character reveals everything through a long speech - like a magician dropping character at the end and telling the audience how they did it.

Also, as a side note - and I wasn't sure if I was going to mention this or not - I got a very strong sense that I had read this story before. Most people probably won't know what I'm talking about. But back when I was about eleven/twelve years old, I read a book called *The Forbidden Game* by the same author who wrote *Vampire Diaries*, about a girl who gets pulled into a game and must find her friends before the time is up. There's also a mysterious, gorgeous guy called Julian pulling the strings (holy shit, I was in love with him back then) and this book is so similar. Really. It makes me wonder if the author read it too.

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Reread this gem before picking up my arc of *Finale* because I'm not ready for these books to end. :( Hitting up the audio this go around, compliments of my library via Hoopla.

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How can I write a review for this giant ball of awesome and do it justice? I was intrigued by the summary from the second I found this was coming out, but had no clue if it would live up to the hype. The back

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cover boasts of "The spell-casting fantasy destined to become a sensation" and Fox 2000 has already purchased the rights to turn this into a major motion film, which claims some pretty mind-blowing story is within the covers. This book was even better than I could have imagined and then some. Hi, my name's Chelsea and I'm addicted to Stephanie Garber's world of Caraval.

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The blurb tells you everything you need to know going in; honestly, the less you know the better and the more confused you feel, the more enjoyable your reading experience will be. Every single chapter had some sort of twist, and whether it was minor or major, it got me. EVERY. SINGLE. TIME. This book was somehow 400 pages, but it went by too quickly. I kept saying "Just one more chapter" and next thing you know, it was finished. Sort of. Because YAY book #2 is coming! Well, once she writes it of course. (No pressure Steph. I'm only gnawing my nails to the bloody nub in anticipation.)

Surprisingly, one of my favorite things about this book was the budding romance between Julian and Scarlett. I must be maturing (HAH!) and opening my reading door to some new things, because years ago this would have grossed me out to the core. The good news is it isn't gross and cheesy; the tension continually grows throughout the book but it is really quite clean. This is something I wouldn't bat an eye at letting my teenager read; the romance was tastefully done and, while refraining from being cheap and raunchy, sucked the reader in as the relationship grew. IMO, this showed what true talent the author had in being able to gain the reader's interest in her romantic composition without relying on overdone sexual situations that are graphic and distracting from the heart of the story.

JULIAN. I know Scarlett is supposed to be the show stopper here, but Julian stole the limelight for me. I fell in love with his character from the first page he showed up; he's rugged, bold, and hilarious while carrying meaningful dialogue and playing a deeper role than just eye candy. I found myself cheering for him constantly throughout the story, and even when suspicion is cast his way multiple times (which both was rightly and wrongly cast), I couldn't have cared less. This series I believe was set up, not as a complete focus on one character with many supporting roles, but as a character study on multiple people with a more complex story that interweaves multiple interests. While it is told mostly through Scarlett's POV, we have a view into other's interests as well, and the massive cliff hanger on the final page has set this up to be a strong series that should continue without a hitch.

There is an overall dark feel to this book, and there is some disturbing violence in a fantasy-related sense, but it was necessary and intriguing to the story line. The mystery surrounding Legend and his

## Caraval

traveling Caraval performers was breathtaking; I found myself completely lost in this otherworld. To me, it had a historical fiction feel with a side of science fiction due to the fantasy aspect, which made for a unique read. I'm not sure what else to add, other than I have an advanced case of Caraval hangover and need the book #2 cure ASAP. If you enjoy Young Adult novels, regardless of your age, you'll want to open your heart and your book shelf up to this one. I hate writing reviews this far in advance for a book that doesn't come out until next year, but go ahead and pre-order, make a note to yourself to request at your library in January, or go to NetGalley and request your copy, because it will have a guaranteed spot on my Top 10 Wrap Up at the end of the year.

\*I received my copy from the publisher in exchange for a fair and honest review. So SO grateful and am already sending up prayers for book #2 once it's ready. ...more

## Caraval Summary

Before you enter the world of Caraval, you must remember that it's all a game . . .

4.5 stars. I'm very impressed with this book. The most important thing you need to know is that, although it's marketed as such, it really isn't a competition per se. I mean, it's as much a competition as THE NIGHT CIRCUS is.

Sure, it's a game indeed, a treacherous game that you can lose yourself in at any moment, but it's not a competition. I'm not going to elaborate, because I'd have to reveal some things that will spoil some surprises, so you'll just have to trust me on that.

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But it's good, so good. It plays with the reader so well. It's not only Scarlett who risks her life to win the game, it's also us, or so I felt. I felt as I were a player myself. Sometimes characters are clueless and don't see what is in front of them while we readers scream our heads off trying to make them SEE. This never happens in this book. Because whenever Scarlett learns something, we learn it too.

The reader in me can't help but try to guess what has happened and who that character is and what the characters will face in the future, etc. I just can't help myself. And so that's what I did. But even though I kept trying to have things figured in my mind before the main character ever could, I still ended up being delightfully surprised.

What really shines in this book is the action. Every new chapter brings a new setting or mishap or character: the story progresses well. Sometimes scenes can be lethargic because of an exaggerated amount of description, but that too never happens in CARAVAL.

What stole my heart was the magical, fairytale-esque writing style and narration. Though it obviously is a young adult novel "no cross-genre going on" I didn't mind that it wasn't more sexy or ghastly.

It's very worth reading if you're a fan of fantasy novels, uncanny and treacherous stories and thrilling, intelligent plots.

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Caraval

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This freaking book HOLY CRAP.

I have a feeling this book is going to be a huge hit when it comes out, and rightfully so. This is the kind of story that you just want to devour because you can't get enough. It's a beautiful story about sisterhood and adventure, full of amazing characters and a delightfully dark world. It's this grotesque Wonderland like world where the Mad Hatter is calling the shots.

Honestly cannot wait for you guys to get your hands on this. Keep an eye out for it because wow. This freaking book HOLY CRAP.

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Video review to come closer to publication date! ...more

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## Caraval Quotes

Read 2 | April 2019

I am hERE to reread before Finale and also am just so happy to be melting back into this world. It's such a vivid, lush and gorgeous book, I pretty much can't contain myself. I do think Legendary is superior to the two, but I really appreciated Scarlett's journey through PTSD more this time. She's absolutely fighting through the trauma of abuse to live a life where she can make choices without spiralling into fear. I'm just...! I love Scarlett. (Tella is my fave and Legendary Read 2 | April 2019

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Also it's GORGEOUS. And I am 10/10 here for literally every time someone mentions Dante, they're like, "eh, he's pretty and he knows it." He does know it. Dante is the prettiest.

\*:Â·i¾ÿâœ§\*:Â·i¾ÿâœ§

Read 1 | Sept 2017

Okay why didn't I read this sooner??! IT'S SO MAGICAL. I totally preordered it and then immediately decided to wait 9 months to read it. I don't know either, mate. This is the life of the Procrastination Queen. Also I saw a lot of disappointed reviews, so I was prepared for teeth gnashing and refurbishing it as a hat if I didn't like it. But I kind of accidentally loved it?? Except for the narrator. I would be like 500% okay if Scarlett fell into a bucket of soup and never got out. BUT NARRATOR ASIDE = wow it was weird and wonderful.

+ The world was actually incredible.

It's like set in this mysterious carnival type island world. So think: gondolas and weird tunnels and magical shops and doors that change directions and rooms that grow and shrink with your emotions. It was like Alice in Wonderland but SINISTER and with a vague circus vibe and like set IN VENICE. Duuuude. I like. I LOVE it when buildings have their opinions though lowkey am curious why that room didn't crush Scarlett because that would've been exciting. BUT OK.

+ The writing was rather beautiful too.

Except for that line where she likened a kiss to "giving birth to the dawn" or whatever and I'm

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like...mate. You do not put BIRTH and KISS in the same thought with a guy you just met. Ya know. Anyway. I really liked all the vivid descriptions! It didn't feel too flowery but just added to the magical vibe. So so much magical vibes.

+ Mind twisty!

They start off the book saying "nOTHING IS WHAT IT SEEMS" and Scarlett promptly forgets that 2 seconds later and freaks out over everything. I would like to stuff her in a shoe. But it was really really well done!! I had SO many questions. It tossed me about a LOT. And I questioned everyone and decided they were all evil by page 3. So basically: I had a freakin good time. I loooove worlds that are so morally grey and all "IT'S A GAME AND EVERYONE'S GONNA GET STABBED!" I mean. Monopoly was so yesterday.

+ Okay but real talk: Scarlett...why.

Just why. She was the typical: "I am a good and wholesome creature." sort of character who informed us 87 x per chapter that she was GOOD. Aka, super boring. I do think she had good character development, but if a bucket had narrated it would've been just as exciting. Which is weird that I still love the book a LOT even if Scarlett is as stimulating as that plastic fork over yonder?? Nice.

+ SISTER STORY!!

Except Scarlett was boring and Tella was a self-centred ass, but you know what. Family...ya can't pick 'em. And I do love books about sisters, EVEN IF Scarlett did forget for a second she wasn't Elsa and threw out the "You can't love a boy you just met" line even though Scarlett was freaking in love with a boy she just met. Apparently we are in Disney now.

+ The romance was honestly super BITTER and I liked it.

Let's have some salt and vinegar on those CHIPS my friends, because Scarlett is Too Holier Than Thou, to fall in love with the rougish sailor who I was totally all for 100% of the time. Especially when I thought he was the villain. That would've been a fab plot twist. But whatever. JULIAN. YOU DASTARDLY LITTLE SNAKE. I loved how they fought so much but obviously cared about each other. #shipping

+ A few negatives?

Eh, okay so the ending had a LOT of high stakes things going on but...it was kind of writing so apathetically I wasn't even worried. It was too rushed and the reactions of the characters weren't realistic enough. Also I'm a fussy turnip. Just in case you didn't pick that up yet. I also am frikkin' sick of fantasy being so sexist because there's literally no need in a world that's not attached to ours. STAHP. And there was a LOT of repetition. Irritating ya. But I survived because I'm a champion inside.

ALL IN ALL: Look I thoroughly enjoyed the magical setting and it gave me ALL SORTS OF FANTASY APPRECIATION. No really!! I finished it and thought "I love this, I genuinely do" and I want to immediately read more books about Caraval and hopefully find myself a bedroom that expands when I put more books in it because I am heckin' running out of bookshelf room here. Narrator = nope. (Although I loved that it was in 3rd person!) Julian = yes. Creepastic psycho mysterious Carval master = HECK YES. And

Caraval

the world is honestly so inspiring to me I need to eat a cake and sit down for a while.

Every person gets on impossible wish, if the person wants something more than anything, and they can find a bit of magic to help them a long. ...more

Well that was disappointing.

## Caraval Characters

Welcome, welcome to Caraval! The grandest show on land or by sea. Ever since Scarlett was a child, she heard tales of the wonderful, mysterious and dangerous Caraval.

Trapped on a tiny island by her monster of a father, Scarlett dreams of nothing but attending.

Hundreds and hundreds of people hope and beg for a position in the games all in the attempt to obtain the grand prize - a single wish.

Much to Scarlett's delight and terror, just a few days before her wedding she receives an invitation  
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At the insistence of her younger sister (Tella) and a mysterious boy, Scarlett escapes her island home and tyrannical father to enter the games.

Only, things do not go as planned. Her sister is missing and the dangers are mounting - will she be able to make it to her wedding? Will she be able to make it out alive?

The main problem I had with this book is the decision-making skills, the "magic" and the general YA ness. Unfortunately, that overshadowed the book.

The Decision-Making skills - aka we are always going for the worst option, aren't we?

There's being sheltered...and then there's being extremely stupid. Scarlett Dragna falls under the latter.

There were so many, many times I wanted to shake her - if there is choice between a dark, dank ominous cave vs a gentle sunlight path, she'd be halfway down the cave-monster's gullet before I could blink.

She just has a knack for that sort of thing. It probably doesn't help that despite repeated assurances that: What happens beyond this gate may frighten or excite you, but don't let any of it trick you. We will try to convince you it's real, but all of it is a performance. A world built of make-believe. Our

Caraval

lovely Scarlett believes everything - every single thing - that is said to her.

The Magic - aka it's not SUPPOSED to be realistic, Haha

I loved the idea of the Caraval - the ethereal magic, the enigma of the game and (of course) the trickery of Legend. But, the book fell short.

The world-building needed to be significantly stronger. For a world that was purported as being one of intense magic and intrigue, everything was a bit meh and haphazard.

The author used the excuse "but it's magic" as a crutch so freaking much.

To explain: there's magic worlds out there that I believe 100%.

Harry Potter, for example, was beautifully fleshed out. Yes, it was pure magic but it was also purely believable.

I could instantly tell you what would and wouldn't make sense in this world.

Caraval... not so much.

The author has all these wild crazy ideas and instead of building and connecting them... she just called it magic and that was it...

For example, one of the bigger things in this novel was the clothing changes.

A dress changes color, shape, form? And is the perfect size? How? Magic!

... but... how? Is it a spell? Enchanted object? Mysterious ancient witchcraft? It's magic!

No seriously. How do you have godlike seamstress powers? I SAID IT WAS MAGIC

Okay. So there's magic dresses. But how does that connect to the magic people? Mysterious sellers? Artifacts? Magic. \*cocks gun\*

So... ultimately, the magic was used as a cool and trendy tool rather than a fleshed out aspect of the world.

General YA-ness - aka this sounds familiar

Of course, because this is YA romance, all the big kisses had to have oddly-specific descriptions: He tasted like midnight and wind, and shades of rich brown and light blue. And, even better: It tasted like

Caraval

the moment before night gives birth to morning. It was like the end of one thing and the beginning of something else all wrapped up together Swoooooon.

The 2018 PopSugar Reading Challenge - A book recommended by someone else taking the PopSugar Reading Challenge

Audiobook Comments

The tone and inflection were alright, but listening to it felt a bit flat. I think it was because how frustrated I was with Scarlett's decisions... The narrator (Rebecca Soler) was fabulous in other books, I think it was just me being annoyed with the story rather than something on her end.

If you are curious about Rebecca Soler, check Tucker the Reader's interview!

Blog | Instagram | Twitter ...more

• • Whatever you've heard about Caraval, it doesn't compare to the reality. It's more than just a game or a performance. It's the closest you'll ever find to magic in this world. • •

Thank you to Flatiron Books for sending me an advance reading copy of Caraval for review purposes.

4.5 STARS

This book was just absolutely ENCHANTING! I didn't know how high or how low to set my expectations before going into Caraval but one thing is for sure by the time I closed this book: Caraval surpassed all my expect

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This book was just absolutely ENCHANTING! I didn't know how high or how low to set my expectations before going into Caraval but one thing is for sure by the time I closed this book: Caraval surpassed all my expectations and more. I've always been a sucker for circus/carnival themed books but I never read another book that came close to one of my favorite circus tales and favorite books of all time, The Night Circus. But Caraval has easily set its place right next to The Night Circus as one of the most magical stories I have ever read.

From the very first page up until the last, there was never a dull moment while reading Caraval. It was

## Caraval

just an enigma wrapped in magic and deception. One minute you think you have the story and the characters all figured out, the next minute the storyline takes you on a completely different direction! There were just so many twists, turns, and puzzles that every page leaves you hanging at the edge of your seat.

Although Caraval didn't really feel like it took place in a circus/carnival like I was hoping it would, the world building was still very mystical. Clues and objects are paid in your deepest secrets, greatest fear, or even days of your life. There are tunnels that drive you mad and make you question what is real and what is simply part of the game. Caraval was just full of so many surprises that'll keep you turning the page. I had so many theories right from the very beginning that kept changing and evolving as the story progressed. I was so immersed in trying to crack the big mystery that was Caraval and Legend. Remember that it's just a game. But is it really? ;) This book will definitely leave you with more questions than answers in the end so prepare to be mind blown!

I can't even put into proper words how magical this book truly is. Of course I can't speak for everybody, but I can almost guarantee that you'll never read a story like Caraval! Stephanie Garber has made quite the entrance into this community with this captivating piece of work. I almost can't believe that Caraval is actually her first book! I can see so much potential in this author and in this world that she has created. I definitely can't wait for book two because something tells me that Stephanie has more tricks and magic up her sleeve for her readers! :)

\*\*\* The quote in this review was taken from an uncorrected proof and should be compared to the final copy upon release. ...more