



## Dive Smack

*Demetra Brodsky*

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## **Dive Smack** Demetra Brodsky

Theo Mackey only remembers one thing for certain about the fire that destroyed his home: he lit the match.

Sure, it was an accident. But the blaze killed his mom and set his dad on a path to self-destruction. Everything else about that fateful night is full of gaping holes in Theo's mind, for good reason. Maybe it's better that way. As captain of the Ellis Hollow Diving Team, with straight A's and solid friends, he's only one semester away from securing a scholarship, and leaving his past behind.

But when a family history project gets assigned at school, new memories come rushing to the surface, memories that make him question what he really knows about his family, the night of the fire, and if he can trust anyone—including himself.

## **Dive Smack Details**

Date : Published June 19th 2018 by Tor Teen (first published May 19th 2018)

ISBN : 9780765396952

Author : Demetra Brodsky

Format : Hardcover 336 pages

Genre : Young Adult, Mystery, Contemporary, Thriller, Fiction

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## From Reader Review Dive Smack for online ebook

### Ashleigh says

DIVESMACK is out today!! Happy Book Birthday!!! Go forth and buy your copy. :)

I was fortunate to receive an ARC of this amazing book and that it was I base my review upon

Theo Mackey knows only one thing about the fire that killed his mother, and that's that he lit the match. He can't remember anything else about that night. New memories begin to surface and he begins to question all he knows about that night.

I haven't read a thriller in quite awhile and I really enjoyed this one! I absolutely love Theo and all of the other characters in this book, like Chip and Iris. I loved the fact that it is set in my home state of Massachusetts and that I could recognize the settings and the nods from the author who grew up here as well. I love how Demetra made the story easy to follow for someone who doesn't know much about swimming. I found myself drawn into the world and characters and trying to figure things out. I love when a book keeps you guessing and wondering.

This was an incredible debut novel, which I gave 5/5 stars! The story was wonderfully written and engaging. If you're looking for a YA thriller, definitely add this one to your TBR. I can't wait for my finished copy!

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### kelly {BookCrushin} says

Check out 5 Reasons why you should read Dive Smack! Dive Smack is now available!

This is a great thriller with all the twists and turns you are craving!

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### Bookwraiths says

Originally reviewed at Bookwraiths.

My rating is 2.5 stars.

*Dive Smack* by Demetra Brodsky is a solid debut novel, one which tells an easy to follow story filled with enough mystery, suspense, and supernatural elements to keep readers turning the pages.

Theo is a high school kid dealing with a lot of stress. His normal teen issues like school projects and a burning desire to gain a scholarship to Stanford University complicated by the fact he is an orphan. (His mother having died years ago in a house fire, and his dad passing away from a heart attack a year ago.) Theo now living with his grandfather, who has become a heavy drinker since his son's death and emotionally unavailable.

The only support structure our young man has is his best friend Chip, his teammates on the school diving team, a girl named Iris he is definitely attracted to, and his Uncle Phil (not really his biological uncle but his dad's best friend) who is also his treating psychologist. These people and the Adderall he constantly takes helping Theo cope with a reality marred by unresolved grief and an unspoken fear that he was the one who started the house fire which killed his mom and, ultimately, caused his dad's death.

But just like it only takes a spark to ignite a fire, it only takes a family history project at school to set Theo's fragile existence a blaze. His and his partner Iris's harmless investigation into their families' pasts leading to Theo having dreams of unremembered events, uncovering unknown facts, and, finally, learning horrible truths that lead to a final revelations which changes everything!

Probably the most enjoyable thing about this story for me was the mystery elements. I thought Demetra Brodsky wove her clues into the ongoing narrative skillfully and for maximum effect, never giving them too much of the spotlight, and allowing the suspense to build organically. This mystery driving my personal desire to finish *Dive Smack* to gain the answers to all my questions. The conclusion a fitting wrap up for Theo's story.

As for criticisms, they are a bit more lengthy, but I'm not going to belabor my dislikes. Basically, I found the first half of the book to be rather slow moving, tedious at times, and rather dull; loads of buildup without any real excitement, if you will. This probably had something to do with the amount of time spent detailing Theo's diving; a sport which I personally don't find very interesting, but others might. I also never warmed to Theo as a protagonist, finding him to be a really difficult character to empathize with or even like. I also felt that there really wasn't any thrills in this book, at all. Definitely, the mystery and hints of the supernatural are there, but thrills . . . No, not very many of those anywhere.

Overall, *Dive Smack* is an entertaining book which uses its clues, questions, and mysteries to keep afloat what would otherwise be a rather ho-hum affair. I did enjoy my time spent with this story, and I do believe others might enjoy it much more than I did, finding in Theo a modern teen in whom they can empathize.

I received this book from the publisher in exchange for a fair and honest review. I'd like to thank them for allowing me to receive this review copy and inform everyone that the review you have read is my opinion alone.

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**chloe ???? ?? ?????.\*? says**

4.5 stars :D

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**Jeff Giles says**

Holy s--t, what a thrilling debut. Late in the game, when most psychological thrillers start to fall apart, this one picks up speed. Apart from engineering sly twists and turns, the author draws truly compelling, complex, true-to-life characters. You will NOT forget Theo or his quest to understand what happened one fateful night.

## Christy says

If you've reviewed DIVE SMACK on Goodreads, consider transferring your review to Amazon. Goodreads helps readers/bloggers and Amazon helps them PLUS authors!

Review DIVE SMACK here

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DIVE SMACK IS OUT NOW! Order it here: <https://www.demetrabrodsky.com/books/>

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So, it's a week after I finished Dive Smack and trying to put together coherent words is still a challenge. WHAT the heck when do I get my heart back?

Here's what I loved about #DIVESMACK (basically everything):

1. Characters you can't forget. Thrillers are at their best for me when they're character first. When I'm looking for thrill, I want to be inside the character's heads, feeling what they're feeling, questioning what they're questioning. Dive Smack puts the characters front and center; Theo's voice is clear through the story.
2. An interesting parallel with diving and Theo's life. Demetra starts every chapter with a dive term that directly correlates to the piece of the story that unfolds within. This adds intrigue and also builds the reader's sense of what Theo is experiencing.
3. The build toward the unraveling. As the story progresses, you become completely unnerved. My skin was crawling all the way through the end.
4. Psychology that will make you rethink everything you knew. I can't say a lot about how the psychological aspect of the story unfolds but you find out quickly that not everything is what it seems. It's like not what you assume, either.
5. A satisfying ending. The end never felt rushed or unbelievable. I appreciate that my questions were answered!

PS - we all need a Chip in our lives. #YouGotThis <3

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## Vicky Who Reads says

*4 stars*

I really enjoyed reading this one! It was a **very solid debut**, and only got better as I read on.

I'm going to treat this review like ripping off the bandaid, taking care of the few meh things first, before jumping on all the positives (and there's a lot of them--positives that is).

There were a total of two things that I wasn't too fond of, in the scope of the billion other things I loved.

1. The **first half was slower than I wanted** it to be. Maybe I have a short attention span. Maybe I wasn't invested yet. But I feel like Brodsky didn't whet our appetites enough in the beginning and add enough intrigue at the start to make me really feel invested in the novel. It took a lot longer to start, but once I got to the halfway point, I was eating this book up like it was the best thing that ever happened to me. The second

half was sooo worth it.

2. The **premise needed a little more basis** and background. As much as I like how Theo learns all these things about himself, I just felt like what spurred it on (a school project on family) didn't have enough backing to it and felt kind of weak and out of the blue despite it being the sole reason this book exists. Without the project, this wouldn't really be happening. So I wanted more discourse on just why the project exists and how it's important.

Despite both of these, I still really enjoyed the book. There were just so many good things to it.

It was **absolutely thrilling** by the end. I am so surprised by how invested I got in this novel, and I definitely didn't expect that! There was so much going on that you don't realize during the first half, but things are slowly revealed and you become more and more suspicious of some characters, and it was all so intriguing.

Brodsky **totally rocked the thriller/mystery aspect** of this novel, and it was my absolute favorite part of reading this book! There are so many clues Brodsky leaves in the first half, but it's a shame that you don't know they're clues until the second half because they're all important, yet less intriguing when you don't suspect anything.

Besides this, I really enjoyed the other aspects of the premise. I found it really cool to read about **Theo, a diver**, as I've never read many books featuring this sport before. But I really love how Theo's performance in diving was a sort of parallel to how disastrous his life was at the moment. Plus, it's still a very important part to the plot.

Also, it has a **male narrator**. Now, I really love my girls, but it was cool to see a male narrator and more importantly, **male friendships that weren't pissing contests!** Theo and Chip were such great friends and I really liked seeing their supportive dynamic. Even Theo and the rest of the team & rival team had some decent interactions, which was really positive to see.

(Now I just need a male reader to tell me if this is accurate.)

Plus, family! I love **how important family was to this** novel, and was definitely torn over a couple members in this book. Theo's kind of lost without his family, and seeing his journey to building relationships and finding new people (surrogate or not) to have as a family was really enjoyable.

Overall, I really liked reading *Dive Smack*, especially for the mystery, and totally recommend! Seriously, stick it through at least past halfway, because I assure you the mystery is worth it!

*Thank you so much to Tor Teen and Jean Book Nerd for providing me with an advance reader's copy in exchange for an honest review!*

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## **Katherine Moore says**

\*Full blog tour post can be found here:  
<http://kamoorephoto.booklikes.com>

So it was quite easy to give this twisty and exciting psychological YA thriller a 5-star review. It has been

harder to put into words every single thing as to why, because I was so taken by surprise by Demetra's brilliant debut novel. It seems as though from the moment I laid eyes on the beautiful cover for 'Dive Smack' (the flames above a young man plunging into the water), I needed to read it. And then I was immediately lost inside this book from the opening two quotes, particularly this one from Carl Jung,

"Your vision will become clear when you look inside your heart. Who looks outside, dreams. Who looks inside, awakens."

What a way to start the book!

If you read the synopsis of the book above, you'll know by now that it's about Theo Mackey, a high school springboard diver who has had both of his parents pass away tragically, and then he starts to question the memories he has of the fire that killed his mom, particularly as new ones surface as he researches a family project for school. Theo luckily has some great friends he can count on, but he lives with his alcoholic grandfather (GP), and he's starting to find his home life and new stressors are affecting his usually perfect diving, something he can't afford to screw up, being the captain of Team Monarch. And the big school family project is what really starts to mess with Theo's understanding of the fire, his family, and this makes him question what's going on in his head. It seems he's gradually losing his grip. That's really what leads him to get more help from Dr. Maddox, a family friend and psychiatrist.

\*Note: I'm leaving a LOT of story/plot out, so there are no spoilers.

Now that's a very basic overview of what you are getting yourself into with this, but it goes from being a book about this likable guy on the diving team at a high school (and I now know so much more about springboard diving beyond my watching the Olympics every four years), to being a very clever, psychological thriller with details and twists I never expected. Demetra has employed some very clever writing devices that make this a standout: I love the way she begins each chapter with a diving term that correlates to the part of the story that it contains (note that Dive Smack is pretty painful), which is absolute genius. Her writing is also very fluid, and weaving interludes with the past and other 'voices' are done seamlessly. Also, since this is a thriller, the pacing builds up steadily to an eventual crescendo, within an ending where all the tense energy flows throughout the end chapters.

Theo is such a well-fleshed out character (as are Chip, Iris, Amy, and others), that you really get a feel for who this guy is; Demetra has created so many endearing things about about him, that you can't help but root for him the whole way through: we know he has two moles on his face, his car is called Bumblebee after the Transformer, he likes classic rock, and of course, he's an orphan. And he likes to use puns.

But the real treat in this book is how it ropes you in (it gets better and better the deeper you dive in: pun intended), how it becomes way more than a book about a few high schoolers; it becomes about a sensitive young man uncovering his past and the deception that is swirling around him. Then the massive and very dark twist at the end takes the reader, and Theo, by surprise, making this precisely what earns this book its top marks. It left me tearful, it made me laugh, AND gasp. I can't wait to see what comes from Demetra next, especially if it's another thriller as riveting and original as this one.

\*And just so you know - Dive Smack: When a diver under or over rotates or twists on a dive, hitting the water with enough force to cause pain or physical injury.

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## Jordan Eaton says

Where do I begin with this book? I have just finished reading it and cannot find the words to describe how I

feel. First, I will say that this book is absolutely phenomenal. The story is fast-paced and keeps you on the edge of your seat. The plot twists that happen throughout the book keep you guessing until the very end. The writing is wonderful. All around this book is fantastic. Who knew a book about a teenage diver could make you feel so many things? Definitely a must-read!

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### **Rose Quinn says**

OH MY GOSH. I don't even know where to start. I was so excited to read an advanced copy of this novel and WAS NOT disappointed. The mystery of what happened the night that Theo's mom died was woven through the book in a skillful way from the beginning. But it wasn't all tension and drama because he is still a teenager. He's in school and on the diving team, trying to perfect that 5337D. It was the perfect mix of normal teenage shenanigans (and that lovely teenage love) and the craziness that is going on with Theo. The twist at the end blew my mind a little and after I had closed the book - I sat there putting all the pieces together in my head. This debut is amazing. Theo is the kind of kid who I think we can all see ourselves in. He's amazing. This book is amazing. GO PREORDER IT NOW, it comes out June 19, 2018.

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### **Gillian French says**

Dive Smack was so much fun: all the sports lingo and boy-friendship drama of a Chris Crutcher classic paired with the mind-bending intrigue and paranormal suspense of Donnie Darko and Twin Peaks. Teens readers will absolutely love this page-turner. Demetra Brodsky nails it!

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### **L.D. Crichton says**

Dive Smack by Demetra Brodsky was phenomenal. I received an ARC copy in exchange for an honest review. I'll try to leave a spoiler free one here because you should buy it and see for yourself. :)

I'll start this by saying I'm a picky reader. If a book doesn't capture my interest from the beginning, I usually just put it aside and forget about it, along with the 100 other books I'll eventually "get around to."

Theo's voice is loud and clear, jumping off the page in an authentic and believable manner right from the opening scene with his best friend Chip, and continues throughout the book as I got to know his character. I want to nominate Chip for some kind of best friend in fiction award because he's witty, a little bit crude, but all around amazing. His support for Theo is unfaltering throughout the story and the 'bromance' between the two of them feels so completely genuine, it's impossible not to smile at their interactions with each other on the pages.

The reader becomes immersed in the mystery of Theo and his family history early on when he's assigned a class project about his family tree with very little information to go on, or resources to access information.

Enter Iris, fellow family tree project doer, aspiring journalist, Theo's love interest and all around badass-tattooed-nerd-girl with some surreal tricks up her sleeve. Hard to say much about Iris without spoiling the book, but I LOVED her character because she's smart, doesn't mince words and despite going through some tough stuff of her own, she manages to ground Theo, even when both of their secrets come to the surface and their lives start to unravel.

Dive Smack is a fast-paced, page turner of a book, filled with some witty humor, a hint of romance and more twists and turns than any dive out there!

I recommend this story. It was a 5 star read for me.

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### **Henry Herz says**

I'm not normally a reader of Young Adult magical realism. But having read Maggie Stiefvater's work opened me to that subgenre. I'm glad it did, because Dive Smack was a literary smack to the head in the best possible way. It offers interesting characters you love (or hate), and a clever page-turning plot. You don't have to be a fan of competitive diving to find this story compelling. Do yourself a favor and get a copy!

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### **Sara (A Gingerly Review) says**

4.5 stars!

This was one heck of a wild ride. I enjoyed every single moment of this thriller.

Thank you to the publisher for sending me a finished copy to review! ♥?

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Full review can be found here: <https://aginglyreview.wordpress.com...>

This thriller had me on the edge of my seat just flipping pages as fast as I could. Masterfully written and so well executed. This is one book you want on your TBR if it isn't already.

Short recap: Theo Mackey knows two things – he started the fire that killed his mother and has to live with that every day of his life and that he is a dang good diver. Everyone that knows Theo knows what happened but they do not hold it against him, nor do they bring it up. But once Theo started a family tree project for school, he slowly starts to discover secrets within his family that were never meant to see the light of day.

This story completely threw me for a loop in the best possible way. I don't know jack or squat about diving but was able to follow this story with no problem. The header of each chapter gave the definition something to do with diving and also tied into each chapter. Talk about brilliant! When I was done with this book, I had to remind myself this was the author's debut novel. I would never have known because she writes like she has been doing this for a very long time.

The characters within this novel are so deeply developed and wonderfully complex. Nobody and nothing is quite who they seem so I had to always question everyone and everything. Theo was going through a bloody nightmare, dealing with his alcoholic grandfather (who is also his legal guardian), his Not His G-D Uncle Phil, someone leaving cryptic notes on his truck, someone from a rival school trying to psyche him out before the big competition, and a potential love interest. On top of that, he may or may not be seeing things... visions and flashbacks. That's a lot for a teenage boy (or any grown adult). At first I did not like his

grandfather but he quickly grew on me. That salty old man was like a Transformer – more than meets the eye. The rest of the characters, including the love interest, Iris, really helped to round out the cast. There are several minor characters that I won't get into great detail about because I want you to read the book.

I will not be able to say enough good things about this story. It really was a fast paced, thrilling adventure with twists and turns I didn't see coming. Even once I got to the end, I wanted more. If you are on the fence about this one, I'm here to push you to the side that tells you to read it. You won't regret it!

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## **Kristi Housman Confessions of a YA Reader says**

This was a great debut that was hard to put down!

Theo lives with his grandpa (GP). His mom was killed in a fire when he was younger. A fire that he started. His father had a heart attack and died a year ago, too. GP has been coping with the death by being drunk all the time. Theo's "Uncle Phil" is a doctor that has been treating him. He's not really his uncle, but his dad's best friend. Phil has been giving Theo medicine to help him focus. Theo is a diver and is trying to get a scholarship to Stanford.

Theo has started having some memories from the past. None of it makes sense. He's also having weird visions. He starts dating Iris during this time. She lost her mom the year before. Iris reads cards and can see things that normal people can't. She starts helping Theo and his best friend, Chip, find out what really happened in the past.

The book is full of twists. Some of them were fairly easy to figure out, but they just kept coming. The second half of the book is super hard to put down.

I thought the dive terms at the beginning of each chapter was really cool and unique. I know nothing about diving, but I found myself looking forward to each of those. I liked Theo a lot, but Chip, Amy, and Iris were favorites.

I gave this book 4 1/2 stars. I will definitely check out Demetra's next book.

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