



# A House of Light and Stone

*E.J. Runyon*

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## **A House of Light and Stone** E.J. Runyon

It's 1967 East Los Angeles. Duffy Chavez is ten years old and from a large, mixed-race, single-parent family. Growing up is never easy, but for young Duffy Chavez, whose childhood is anything but innocent, the journey is particularly painful. Swimming against the tides of her troubled family as well as her own cultural identity, she struggles with the cards she has been dealt. Buoyed up by the belief of a select few, she strives to achieve the kind of self-knowledge that comes so naturally to the 'real girls' all around her. As gaps in the narrative begin to fill, and the truth surrounding Duffy's birth is unearthed, her determination to succeed is rendered all the more astounding. Told in uncompromising clarity through the eyes of a child, A House of Light and Stone is at once full of heartbreak and hope, offering respites of warmth in the coldest of places.

## **A House of Light and Stone Details**

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Author : E.J. Runyon

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## From Reader Review A House of Light and Stone for online ebook

### Cheri says

I truly enjoyed this book so much. Some of the scenes were so powerful - and brought back aspects of my own childhood - that I had to put the book down to compose myself.

I highly recommend this one. I thought it was unique and the storytelling was just fantastic.

I'd go 4.5 if I were able because of some typos and missed/added words. But the story and the execution of it tipped me over to 5 stars.

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### Nikki says

A House of Light and Stone This is a story about Duffy (Defoe) Chavez, a ten-year-old living in East LA in the 1960's. She is in-and-out of foster homes and has recently been reunited with her four siblings after being taken by child protective services when she was younger. It is told in first-person from Duffy's POV and follows her along for approximately a year as she navigates a world where it is far easier to lie and cheat than to be kind. You are first introduced to her dysfunctional family: Artie and Justine are the oldest (and most protective of Duffy), Barbie (as the name suggests, very into clothes and being mostly horrible) and little Chase, who Duffy is basically raising while her mother works two jobs. You are watching the story unfold through the eyes of the child, but a very perceptive and intuitive one. Duffy is a genius, and has tested out of sixth grade, but should technically be in 8th with her IQ. However, she is always hesitant to highlight her accomplishments because she knows this can trigger an abusive episode with her mother (Rennie). Duffy is targeted by Rennie far more than any of the other children, and often draws fire to protect her younger brother, Chase. The reason for which is alluded to later on in the narrative when Duffy overhears a conversation between Rennie and the woman ('Lise) that owns the market down the street. The two women are in a relationship off and on and briefly discuss a history between them involving the fathers of their children. However, this is never discussed again, which I found to be a bit of a disappointment. I recognize that Duffy wouldn't have access to this history (and the mother would never tell her such a thing) but I felt that I missed out on exactly why it was painful for Rennie to be around her daughter, when Duffy tried so very hard to please her in every way. The mother is an intriguing character, and it would be easy to paint her as a one-dimensional villain, heavy-handed and unloving. However, the author gives enough softness to her interactions to allow the reader to see her as she is, a woman that is complex, troubled, and incapable of dealing with loss. Despite the cruelty, Duffy, being the intuitive youngster that she is, recognizes that her mother doesn't know how to cry and has to make her daughter cry for her. Which was a heartbreaking realization to witness from one so young. You also observe her siblings following along Rennie's path in a lot of devastating ways, where being cruel is easier than taking care of someone. The author is able to capture this girl's voice so well that everything you see from her eyes is kind of magical. Which is impressive, given the hardships she faces. Even after being betrayed and mistreated by so many, she still sees so much joy in the world that it's hard not to follow suit in our own lives. That's not to say that this book isn't without problems. I noticed some repeated words in the second half that should've been caught in addition to a few awkward phrases that forced me to reread some passages. I can't say whether this was because I was hearing it through a child's filter, or if it was something that could have been cleaned up just a bit more. Additionally, there were some events that I would have liked to learn more about within the narrative. Overall, this book was a breath of fresh air from a lot of books that I've been reading recently. I cried (a few times honestly) and there were points in the narrative that were just so difficult to get through, but I never wanted to stop. I believe this is a testament to the author's skill and I highly recommend you pick

this one up. But grab a box of tissues. The nice kind with lotion.

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### **Christopher Spalding says**

If ever there was a book about youthful innocence and a trust in things to come, this would, for my money, be it.

Growing up can be tricky at the best of times and Duffy, the central character, has more than her fair share of hurdles to overcome. Yet she does so with good grace, absorbing without complaint not only her own problems, but also those of her family and friends.

Although this is not the sort of book I would usually read, the overall feeling of optimism I got from it made it worthwhile. Despite some of the subject matter being a little on the sad side, it was an easy read and most of all, reminded me of the positive influence having a little hope for a better life can have.

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### **Angela Isaac says**

From the first page I was captivated by Duffy. Her voice is perfectly captured; a child's naivety tempered by a wariness beyond her years from the hardships she experiences. This story is so beautifully written, drawing you into Duffy's world from her perspective. After the first chapter I was hesitant about reading more, already caring for this character so much, that I was scared I would be distraught at what Duffy might have to face. However, I was compelled to follow as her many trials and adventures unfold. I am so happy I did; there is far more light than dark in this novel and by the end I felt so uplifted (though also a little sad to be leaving Duffy and wanting to know how her life progresses).

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### **Barrett says**

This is an exceptionally well crafted story of bright young girl growing up with adversity and responsibility beyond her years. The author has created a wonderful protagonist worthy of of comparison to the well loved "Scout" whose voice is strong and clear. The pacing moves the story and the descriptions allow the reader to ride along with Duffy and share her world. Definitely on to re-read.

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### **Jacqueline Winters says**

The only reason this book took me so long to read was because I couldn't imagine it ending! I instantly loved Duffy, a ten-year-old girl on a personal Quest. I'd find myself thinking about her hours after I'd set down the book, craving to return to 1967 in East LA. This incredibly well-written story is told from Duffy's point of view, and I love that! I really felt like I knew her. Duffy has a very practical approach to life. She's incredibly bright and more responsible at ten than most adults. She understands in a way no young girl should have to what is necessary to survive not just in life but within her family. Reading the final words of this book, all I could think about was how soon can I read it again? It's a must read!

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## **Memcneely says**

This is a well written story of Duffy "Pilar" Chavez growing up in the 60s. At times it is painful to read because you can feel her anguish. She never gives up hope and keeps holding on to her best life.

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## **Eric Hays-Strom says**

I have to admit, I had a hard time starting off with this book. I picked it up, began to read, then set it aside. A while later, I tried again. It seemed this was just not a book for me. But as the days passed, I found myself being drawn back to it. I ignored this impulse for a while, but it grew stronger. On the third attempt, I didn't set the book down again. It grabbed me fully and held my attention for the next 12 hours it took me to read the entire book!

I grew up white, male and relatively comfortable. I was deeply loved by my parents, and I knew that, intimately so. (Yes, there were times I doubted, but only because I didn't get my way!) I didn't get EVERYTHING I wanted... but close enough.

Duffy grew up, on the other hand, Hispanic, female and terribly poor. Was there love in her life? Yes, but it came with a heavy price, and was never unconditional.

Struggling at every turn to earn the love and appreciation every child should receive unconditionally, Duffy takes a practical approach to life, struggling through, learning about sexuality at far too young an age. There are moments of suspense; I was so tense at some places, I found myself holding my breath.

This was an excellent way to spend an afternoon! It left me feeling hope for a little girl who suffered much in such a short time, but did not give the reader a HEA... a "Happily Ever After" ending. And, indeed, this book would have been cheapened with an HEA! The ending is just perfect.

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## **Beth Arvin says**

Thoroughly enjoyed this book. It would make a great book club read.

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## **S.A. Gibson says**

A House of Light and Stone is an engrossing and captivating tale of a child's experiences in Los Angeles. Duffy is almost eleven, and we follow her daily life as she moves into a house in Boyle Heights. While the story feels real, I found it an exciting adventure story. Our heroine faces the challenges that confront her in her life each day. I will describe some aspects of the story, to try to explain why I enjoyed it.

The story brought me into another world. The story is in a moment in the past and brought me into that different time, place and reality. The tale is told in chronological order. The story is told from a first person POV in past tense. The protagonist struggles in a family with an unstable mother. We are introduced to her siblings, Chance, Barbie, Justine and Artie. Rennie, the family's mother tries to fill her role in the family, without the psychological or material tools to do a good job. The author weaves these characters, who each

have their own motivations, into a unified story. This book leads you on a journey through a difficult life with humor, and comical twists. Duffy's different world is brought to life in the story. The environment, people and shenanigans in this story intrigued me and entwined me into the character's experiences.

Duffy faces several challenges in the story. The characteristics of the people in her life slowly unfold over time. The story has secrets, and there are things going on that Duffy does not understand. We readers must travel along on the journey to find out how she will survive her problems and what her life holds in her future. With each passing page revelations occur in her life that affect our feelings and opinions about the characters and the city. I found powerful drama and unexpected events that continue through most of the book.

There are dangerous secrets, changes and surprises. Duffy is the central character, and I was rooting for her. We can't always agree with Duffy's actions or instincts. We follow Duffy as she meets and becomes friends with neighbors and schoolmates. She has heroes who come into her life and help her. I became invested in the outcome of her childhood struggles and wanted her to win. This story builds over a one year arc.

The book leaves me wanting more. While we get closure with some aspects of Duffy's life, I still want to know where her story is headed. I liked that the story made me care about the characters. I liked learning the details of her life. This story is set in 1966 in the city of Los Angeles. I lived in that city during that time, so I had some familiarity with the world of the story. I would say the most likely audience is people who enjoy authentic stories filled with drama, love and change. While there is some violence and abuse in the story, give it a try. This is one of the best books I have ever read.

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