



# Compromised

*Heidi Ayarbe*

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## **Compromised** Heidi Ayarbe

Maya's life has always been chaotic. Living with a con-man dad, she's spent half her life on the run. Whenever her father's schemes go wrong, Maya finds a scientific way to fix it. But when her dad ends up in prison and foster care fails, Maya grasps at her last possible hope of a home: a long-lost aunt, who may not even exist.

So Maya formulates a plan, and with her wits, two unlikely allies, and twenty dollars in her pocket, she sets off in search of this aunt, navigating the unpredictable four hundred miles from Reno to Boise. Life on the streets, though, becomes a struggle for survival--those scientific laws Maya has relied on her whole life just don't apply. And with each passing day, Maya's definitions of right and wrong are turned upside down when she's confronted with the realities and dangers of life as a runaway. She can't help but wonder if trying to find her aunt--and some semblance of stability--is worth the harrowing journey or if she should compromise and find a way to survive on her own.

## **Compromised Details**

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Author : Heidi Ayarbe

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# From Reader Review Compromised for online ebook

## Jennifer Wardrip says

Reviewed by Sally Kruger aka "Readingjunk" for TeensReadToo.com

Maya loves science. She approaches every situation first with a "hypothesis" and then a plan of action. Her life is filled with situations that need her attention.

Raised by a single father after her mother's suicide, Maya has been shifted from place to place as her father has "hustled" to make a living for them. He was caught in his last con-game, and now he's in prison and Maya has become part of the system. As the newest resident in the orphanage, Maya's latest "hypothesis" is focused on escape.

She puts her plan into action when she learns she may be headed to live with an odd, overly-religious family. Her brief visit with them made her extremely uncomfortable, and she knows she doesn't have much time before she could be living with them permanently. She packs her few possessions and, following her father's vague instructions, heads back to the last place she called home to find a box of her mother's things that supposedly holds valuable information about an aunt who might be her last chance for a real home.

Maya is joined by Nicole, another resident from the orphanage. Not long into their journey, they meet Klondike, a homeless street kid with a disfiguring burn and Tourette's syndrome. Together they begin the search for Maya's aunt.

Life on the streets is tough. The three leave Reno behind by hitchhiking and bumming rides however they can. The little money they have doesn't last long, and as hunger sets in, they resort to raiding dumpsters and shoplifting. They sleep on the streets and try to warm up by stopping in libraries as Maya tries to gather information about her only surviving relative.

Author Heidi Ayrabe does not glamorize life on the streets. Her story of Maya and friends is bleak and without much hope. Readers will be driven to read out of morbid curiosity as they observe the downward spiral of the three travelers. **COMPROMISED** gives insight into the increasing problem of the homeless and the sad fact that innocent children are among them.

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## Mallory Hanson says

To be honest, I randomly picked this book off of the shelf. I do this every once in awhile when I don't know what book to pick. This story takes place at a number of cities and states. It is about two run-aways trying to get from the orphanage home to a long lost aunt who is possibly in Iowa. Along the way, they make stops in alley ways, strangers homes, and libraries across the country. The setting for weather is late fall and winter. The main conflict is Maya's dad leaving her because he is a con artist and convicted felon, and Maya has no known family left except an aunt she never heard of. Maya is mainly a static character, because at first she is shy and reserved but throughout the story she becomes hardened due to her life on the streets. I would describe Maya as enduring, caring, and she is also very persevering. Nicol, one of the girls from the orphanage that follows her, is very stoic, mean, and basically a loud-mouth. There wasn't really a quote that explained or signified any part of the story but at one point, on page 23, Maya says; "I'm screwed." Which is

right before her dad goes to prison and she gets sent to the kids place so this kind of sets a mood for what happens. I think the message would point blank be 'Perseverance' because that's really what Maya does throughout the whole story is try to find some aunt she might or might not actually have and she risks her whole life and everything she has worked for to continue her life and help her dad. One of the reading strategies I used quite often was to make inferences because I was always developing an opinion about the characters or what they chose to do. Also, I used 'monitor' a few times because occasionally the story kind of hit a dead end or a loop hole and I had to stop and ask myself, "Wait, what?" and sometimes even reread what I had read. Last, I visualized so much of this story. I literally had a movie going in my head and I could just picture Maya and Natalie all dirty and thin, trying to scrape together change to find some type of food, and the disgusting alleys and old abandoned buildings they had to take shelter in. Finally, I thought this book was so amazing. This often happens when I pick random books off the shelf. I would for sure recommend this to any reader, except not if you don't like cussing because there is quite a bit of that in this book but otherwise it is so great and a movie just plays in your head the entire time.

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### **Cassidy says**

I really liked this book! When I first started reading it, I thought I liked it. And then I got to the middle and I was so sick of it... But I kept on reading because the last time I gave up on a book was in elementary school... And when you get to the end, WOW. Everything you thought was going to happen? Think the complete opposite! The ending made up for the boring middle- it was one of those books. I definitely recommend!

BTW: I always get so irritated when everything turns out okay in the end- but then they don't tell you what happened in the rest of the character's lives. That happened in this one- but I was really only mad for a little bit haha

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### **Chantry says**

I mean... It wasn't BAD, but at the same time I feel like it was just really slow??? And walking from Downtown Boise to Garden City in the middle of December would be terrible and I would not wish that on my worst enemy. Idk, maybe I was just too focused on the fact that they were going to Boise. Although, I did really love Nicole. And when Maya told Klom about Tourette's and his reaction to it was so sweet omg.

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### **Regan says**

This book was just average. I think it could've been good if it was seriously trimmed down in length, because I did like the plot, but it seemed it just dragged on forever.

Anyway, good:

Tackled some really deep issues and a good/believable way. Also, a unique issue of Tourette's, which I do not see portrayed in many other books.

The ending. I really loved the ending. I thought it was the best part of the book. It was so believable and true

to life, as things don't normally end all happy and cheerful, with a nice pretty bow. I also love how it left things ambiguous and open for interpretation.

The characters were a bit hit and miss with me. I liked them, but at the same time I hated them, especially the main character, whose name I can't seem to recall.

The plot was good and interesting, but at the same time things didn't remain exciting for long, as it was too stretched out.

Which leads me onto:

The bad:

The book was just too long. I'm all for long books. In fact, I prefer them over shorter books. Long books can be effective if they keep the excitement and action going throughout, but I don't think this book achieved that. In places, it was extremely slow-moving, and I felt like the characters sometimes repeated the same things over-and-over again, so yeah there was a lot of filler used just to stretch out of the book.

The characters were, at times, annoying and bland. For instance, I was so bored with the main character's constant intelligent ramblings. Yeah, we get it she has a brain, but we didn't need to be reminded of it on every page. A few times throughout the book would be fine. Because of these ramblings, the main character also seemed a bit big headed, and it showed through her tendency to look down and judge everyone she came in contact with, just for not having a massive abnormal brain like hers.

Also, her friend, the other character who went on tangents about mob members. Yeah, the same problem noted above. I also think it was unbelievable how out of all the people in the world, these two girls, both obsessed and knowledgeable about something, found each other. How likely is it that they can both go off on tangents and know so much about their subjects, throughout the course of the book? Fair enough if it was one of them, but both of them knowing so much just seemed kind of far-fetched.

The conversations. They were a bit hit and miss too. Sometimes, the dialogue was captivating, but other times it was monotonous. The same thing was mentioned a lot, as said above, and in a dialogue-driven book, with more dialogue than anything, it's kind of problematic when I found myself skimming over most parts of it.

Anyway, I'd recommend this book to anyone with a lot of free time on their hands, since it isn't exactly a quick read. I'd also recommend it to anyone that enjoys dialogue/character driven books, as opposed to action/ fast-paced book.

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## **Kari says**

Searing, potent and unflinching, *Compromised* is a uncharted look into life on the streets and what it means to be pushed aside by society. Torn between her love of her father and her anger at being betrayed by him,

Maya finds herself thrust into a world unimaginable to anyone not in it. Though her life has been less than ideal, she would easily take the cons and quick escapes to an orphanage.

Maya is a reverberating character, holding a powerful mix of courage and fear. Her character dynamic and progression is painfully realistic with her initial reactions to becoming a warden of the state to her decision to leave and try on her own. Holding a certain level of naivety, Maya's struggles are undeniably believable. Despite her anger at her father, she is unable to turn her back on him completely. Many of her reactions are wrenching to read but pull out the true nature of this story. With her penchant for science and a constant need to develop a hypothesis and procedure, Maya's character is pitched in a unique way. Though she has a large vocabulary, her school intelligence is not likely to cause a dissonance with readers.

Sick of being passed around to foster families that don't care, Nicole goes with Maya. Their companionship is both endearing and entertaining, the two tied together by a tragic cause. With nicknames understood only in context, they forge a friendship seen by the reader before the girls recognize it. The softer sides of both shines through, lurking beneath the forced rough exterior they must have to survive not only in foster homes and orphanages but on the streets as well. With an affliction for mobsters, much akin to Maya's science obsession, Nicole's character is as strongly defined and developed as Maya's. Strengthening the overall effect more, the banter between these two provides relief from the overall dark air of the book.

Further along their way, the two girls find a young boy also living on the streets. His character is as noteworthy, memorable and heartrending as Nicole and Maya, all three pulling the reader's compassion and emotions. With his own quirks and habits, Klon adds a strong dynamic to the girls, mixed further with his unique way of viewing things. He tugs Maya and Nicole between being motherly towards him and their own obligations to themselves. The battle between putting themselves first and helping the group comes up often, interspersed with their growing desperation to survive and the things they are willing to do to make it happen.

In a society where people on the streets, young and old alike, are written off and ignored, *Compromised* will pitch a jarring look into the other side. How wrong is stealing, when a cheap bag of cough drops could mean the difference between a night of pain and some sort of relief? How hurt is the diner who's stuck with a bill for some pancakes and coffee when it means some homeless teens have food in their bellies for the day? These questions and more are thrust forward in *Compromised*, ensuring the reader will rethink their state of mind on many things that have become accepted as normal.

With an unerringly strong voice and writing, *Compromised* pulls the reader in from the start and doesn't let them go even after the book has finished. A dark and depressing overall air mixed with innumerable twists, this is a gripping read unlike any other. The reader will constantly question the fate of all three kids, wondering if they will find a way to their goals or end up dying, frozen on the streets like many others. Death is lurking constantly around them, reminding them in countless ways. Intensely developed and defined characters, a guttural world created, and echoing writing, this terrifying look at events still taking place in our modern world is sure to pack a punch and remain with the reader.

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## **Sabrina says**

A beautiful and heartbreaking tale that really opened my eyes on some of the issues in this world.

I am 14 years old and I live a pretty good life. I get good marks in school and I have a kick-ass family that puts up with me. Yet, sometimes, I realize that I can be the most unappreciative brat in the universe. Reading this book made me really appreciate what I have because chances are, if you are reading this, you are/have been spoiled and we all need a good dose of reality that some people aren't as lucky as we are.

My grandma used to tell me all the time that I had a wool blanket over my eyes and I was in my own little Sabrina bubble where the world was filled with puppies and hearts. That was okay when I was younger, ignorant, but now that I am older, I need to start facing the facts. Teens my age, and younger, are leading terrible lives. Some are forced to run away even. And here I am complaining that I couldn't see the movie while some other girl is thanking her stars that she found food that night.

But enough of this. The book Compromised takes us into the life of Maya who is put into the foster care system after her father, a con man, is arrested. Maya is left homeless, parentless and with nothing but her brain (which is one of her best tools by far).

We learn of the misfortunes that happen in the foster care and how hard it is to survive from the other kids in it. Maya has to defend herself from attacks while keeping onto the hope that it will all be okay.

It isn't.

It is a sad truth but a hard-breaking reality. No, she is not going to suddenly get her father back and live a happily ever after because honestly, that doesn't happen. Maya runs away from the foster home in search of an aunt she has never met, with the hope that she will find a home.

Hope is what kept her going. Hope for a home, something I could not do myself. She doesn't want shoes or the new Coach purse but a home and someone to love and care for her.

This story is amazingly real and truly teaches us the truth of living on the streets, the challenges and the hardships Maya must face. It is far too easy to dismiss those who live on the streets as worthless people who deserved it. I know I did, I was raised that way. Raised to not look a beggar into the eye, raised to not show any compassion for the homeless, raised to live in fear of them. To act like I, *I* was superior to them. Disgusting. I am no more better than those on the streets, in fact, I might be worse.

We have to come to the reality that those teens who live on the streets don't necessarily take drugs or drink alcohol or smoke. Sometimes they don't have a choice because life isn't giving them the upper side of the scale. But they push through it and they survive, which takes far more courage and work than I can ever possess.

Being in school, I have learned that running away from home is childish and stupid and will always be terrible. I know they teach us that to prevent us from having a glorified image of living on the streets but I think they are wrong. For Maya, there is not much she can do. She holds onto that last bit of hope she has and goes for it. I say kudos to her.

This book was magnificent, one of the best pieces of Young Adult literature I have ever read. I was unsure about this, seeing that I am normally the girl who reads about forbidden love and high school but I gave it a shot and was left feeling changed. Yes, a book can change you. This story seemed more like reality than fiction, and I believe that there is a Maya living somewhere. Not the character but a person who suffered like Maya.

Truly perfect.

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### **Allie says**

I bawled my eyes out for like half an hour at the end, but it certainly enlightened me to a lot, and the characters were amazing! The only reasons it's not 5 stars are that a.) It was a little lengthy, b.) Cussing, and c.) \*\*\*spoiler\*\*\* An author is simply not allowed to kill off main character(s)! It's like against the code. Okay, I lied, I think it actually added a lot to the story, but still. Anyway, anything that can keep my interest for that long and make me sob is certainly worth at least 4 stars. It's really worth 4.5, but let's keep it at 4 for now.

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### **Doret says**

This is Ayarbe's second YA novel. and the author has been honing are craft. It's always been just 15yr old Maya's and her dad a con -man. Maya has a mind for science, using hypothesis, to outline ways to keep her dad from getting caught. This time there is no getting away. Maya's dad is sent to prison and she's placed in orphanage. After Maya meets her potential foster parents she decides to runaway. Maya's searching for an aunt she's never known and is not 100% sure exist.

Maya's plan to go it alone is changed when Nicole, a girl who has always been in the system follows. The two walk and hitchhike to the state Maya's aunt may or may not be in. Maya formulates hypothesis that read like journal entries.

Nicole is still with me. I never really thought seh'd actually go through with it - running away for real. It's unlike her previous patterns of sticking around and waiting to be found. That's the thing about humans - highly unpredictable variables. I have to construct a new hypothesis, change the materials and variables. And that irritates me, because even my purpose has to change.

Maya's is book smart. Nicole can keep them safe and feed on the street. The two had the worst luck finding places to spend the night.

"I sigh. It's like we're doomed to share our sleeping arrangements with druggies. From the smell of things, we might as we have been lying on a bed of smoldering pot."

After Maya and Nicole feel each other talking becomes easier. I'd call what Maya and Nicole had conversations not dialogue. Ayarbe's has written a wonderfully realistic well layered novel. I loved Compromised, especially the ending, which Ayarbe crushed.

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### **Shannan says**

Well, Compromised certainly isn't bubble gun, popcorn fluff, that's for sure! What a genuine, eye opening book for teens and adults. Maya has no one left. Her mother and father are gone, she is sent to an orphanage, and she must go and find an aunt that may or may not exist. There is only one constant thus far in Maya's life and it is science. On her journey, with little to no money, food, or clothes, she finds a true family in her



new companions; Nicole and Klon.

I know that I am in the dark about how kids live on the streets. I know that I am in no way an expert on raising kids. However, this book makes me want to take in every kid that has been mistreated by their parents or the system. What a waste of youth.

In true form of the book, please accept my review in scientific format:

Purpose: Write a riveting book review for Compromised

Hypothesis: If I can write a wonderful review, I can get people to go out and buy this book.

Materials: Compromised book, my computer, email

Procedure:

- 1) Read book
- 2) Love book
- 3) Write review of loved book
- 4) Post to website
- 5) Send to publisher
- 6) Be thankful that a book touched my heart
- 7) Hug my kids

Variables: Time: Kids – enough said

Constants: Me, Compromised, My computer

Compromised is a thought provoking, gentle way of letting the world know about the pain kids may face while on the streets and in the system. It brought tears to my eyes and makes my heart yearn for the safety of Maya, her friends, and the true kids out there that needs a safe place to stay.

I give Compromised 4 STACKS

With much love, Shannan at [girlsinthestacks.com](http://girlsinthestacks.com)

Warning for parents of YA: There is a character with Tourette's in Compromised. Foul language flows throughout the whole novel. The publisher states the age as 12+. I would recommend 15+.

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## Jan says

Summary: Maya has been living a peripatetic existence with her father, a con artist, constantly moving as each scam falls apart. Maya is a fan of science and uses the scientific method of formulating a hypothesis as a way of trying to impose some order and find solutions for the problems caused by her chaotic life. But when her father is busted once again and sent to prison, Maya must now acclimate to a group home where she waits for a foster family to take her in. Rather than accept this fate, Maya runs away to begin a search to find her long lost aunt. All she has are some paystubs and letters from Boise, Idaho, 400 hundred miles away. Another resident, Nicole, foists herself on Maya and they become (reluctantly, at first) partners in the search. They also connect with a Klondike, a badly scarred young boy with Tourette's Syndrome who has been thrown out of his family because of his disability. They endure many hardships living on the street, as they scrounge for food and shelter. The journey becomes a nightmare of survival, with no guarantee at the end that they will find Maya's aunt.

Themes: Family (what is it?). Is it your blood relatives or the friends who endure hardship with you to help you get where you are going? Loyalty. Maya feels that she has failed a desperately ill Klondike when she leaves him to find some food for the three of them and returns to find him frozen to death. Survival: what happens when the safety net fails and children/teens must live on the street?

Plot: A tense and harrowing journey keeps the reader engaged with what is happening with the characters and hoping that they will survive.

Characters: Original characters you have never seen before. Maya, with her fears of losing control and her desperation to find a halfway normal life and family. Nicole, street savvy but vulnerable, who has long since lost any illusions about control. Klondike, a heartbreaking character who thinks he has a demon because of his Tourette's Syndrome and the superstitious beliefs of his religious fundamentalist family. The contrast between these characters, particularly Nicole and Maya, is fascinating, because at the bottom of it all they both crave the same thing...home and family. Layered characterizations. Nicole has no qualms about doing what is necessary to survive, Maya is still held back by her ethical standards (i.e. shoplifting)

Writing: Relies a bit too much on dialogue, which sometimes slows the pace. But author uses stark, vivid imagery to make the reader feel that they are there on this desperate journey.

It has an Ellen Hopkins feel that will certainly appeal to many teen readers.

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### **Theresa Miller says**

Again, like with *You Don't Know About Me*, I appreciated that the author didn't just skip over the story- she made it long enough that I felt tired for the characters, a part of their lives and their hurt and their trials. I loved Klondike, and ached for him.

The ending wrapped up a little too easily, at the very end, but let's be honest- if things hadn't somewhat resolved themselves, I would have been way more disappointed.

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### **Bookworm1858 says**

Compromised by Heidi Ayarbe

HarperTeen, 2010

452 pages

YA; Contemporary

4/5 stars

Source: Library

Read for YA Book Battle; to me, this is a great example of overlooked. Although HarperTeen is one of the big name publishers, and I know I've read a great deal of their books, I had never heard of this. Additionally 2010 YA books were of great interest to me but I never saw anything about this.

This was a hard book to read, rate, and review, as it deals with teenage homelessness and the idea of family. Maya has her conman father who lets her down once again, causing her to enter foster care. When faced with a disgusting prospective set of parents, she decides to flee and attempt to find her aunt Sarah. As she and two unlikely friends make their way from Reno, NV to Boise, ID, they face unbelievable challenges and attempt to construct their own family.

I loved that Maya was into science; she would make up a purpose and hypothesis, followed by materials, a procedure, variables, and constants. Although I am not quite as strict, I have a similar habit that enables me to move through my to-do list. This helped me connect with her, which I valued because everything she experienced was completely foreign to me.

I also really liked her friends Natale "Capone" and Klondike. Natalie has long been fascinated with mob trivia hence her nickname and she follows Maya from the foster care building. They meet Klondike on the road, a young boy probably with Tourette's whose family kicked him out without understanding his symptoms. They were very sympathetic and their interactions with Maya was great; they made a good team.

The difficult part came when reading about their life on the road. Possessing about ten dollars and their wits, it is a struggle to survive. They walk and hitch their way north, searching for food and compassion but rarely finding either. The disgust for homeless people is frequently expressed and the struggles are described well. It was very emotional for me to read about and so very different from my own life.

Overall: A difficult read with characters facing some of the toughest decisions I've ever read about. Recommended.

Cover: The colors signal a gritty contemporary read as it is.

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### **Ravanna Dee says**

OMG!!! There are no words I could use to describe this book. I laughed, wanted to throw it across the room a few times, and I definitely cried, a lot, but mostly towards the end. I didn't agree with all of the bad language at times, but other than that I thought it was a great read.

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### **Tiffany Gholar says**

I am giving this book 3 out of 5 stars. It is a gripping tale of realistic YA fiction, a genre that I have liked since I was a teenager myself. The reasons I didn't give it more stars have to do with the length of the story and the characterization of the leads. I thought it was too long. There were parts of it that became repetitive and monotonous, and maybe could have been summarized instead of dramatized.

As for characterization, there were times when the dialogue just didn't seem to fit the characters. For example, it was jarring to hear a character who is illiterate use the word "clinical" in a conversation. I couldn't understand how Maya, whose con man father taught her how to scam people, could be so naive at times. The fact that she was trying hard not to be like him was not dramatized well at first. And then there's Klondike. How that poor boy suffered. Disfigured by fire, having only one testicle (was that lost in the fire also?) and having severe Tourette's Syndrome (the kind that makes people swear) seemed like too much to

me. One of these issues would have been enough. It seemed manipulative of the author to make him have all of these problems at the same time. I think Tourette's Syndrome would have been enough, especially since he had the rarest kind. Things like that seemed unrealistic to me.

Still, the emotional impact of the book is undeniable. I really felt for all the characters and cared about what happened to them, which is the most important thing in a book like this one. I would recommend it for older teens because of the subject matter and the the language. Stories like this can open a reader's eyes to the suffering of others around them and teach them to be more compassionate, make readers who have good homes and families grateful, and make those dealing with the issues that drove these teens to run away realize that they are not alone. And that is something a lot of other books can't do.

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