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# The Rules Of Survival



## Synopsis

For Matt and his sisters, life with their cruel, vicious mother is a day-to-day struggle for survival. But then Matt witnesses Murdoch coming to a child's rescue in a convenience store, and for the first time, he feels a glimmer of hope. When, amazingly, Murdoch begins dating Matt's mother, life is suddenly almost good. But the relief lasts only a short time. When Murdoch inevitably breaks up with their mother, Matt knows he needs to take action. But can he call upon his hero? Or will he have to take measures into his own hands? A heart-wrenching portrait of a family in crisis, this is Nancy Werlin's most compulsively readable novel yet.

## Book Information

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Product Dimensions: 5.5 x 0.8 x 8.2 inches

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Average Customer Review: 4.6 out of 5 stars [See all reviews](#) (62 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #423,328 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #95 in [Books > Children's Books > Growing Up & Facts of Life > Difficult Discussions > Dysfunctional Relationships](#) #168 in [Books > Children's Books > Growing Up & Facts of Life > Difficult Discussions > Abuse](#) #183 in [Books > Teens > Literature & Fiction > Social & Family Issues > Physical & Emotional Abuse](#)

Age Range: 12 and up

Grade Level: 2 and up

## Customer Reviews

As Matt explains, it was a sweltering Boston evening, and a date night for their mother. Matt was thirteen at that point, and Callie was eleven on that evening they left their five year old sister Emmy sleeping alone in the apartment, climbed out the window, and raced around the corner to buy a couple of Popsicles at the convenience store. They would return home a few minutes later with the dream that a stranger whose behavior they'd just witnessed might somehow be persuaded to intercede in the frightening and dangerous world they inhabited, a world controlled by Nikki, their nightmare of a mother."Callie and I headed straight for the ice cream freezer, and we'd just reached

it when the yelling began. We whipped around."It was the barrel-shaped man and the little kid. The man had grabbed the boy by the upper arms and yanked him into the air. He was screaming into his face while the kid's legs dangled: 'What did you just do?'"The little kid was clutching a package of Reese's Pieces and he started keening, his voice a long, terrified wail, his small body rigid."The big man--his father?--shook him hard, and kept doing it." 'I'll teach you to take things without permission! Spend my money without asking!'"And then the other man, the one I later knew was called Murdoch, was between the father and son. Murdoch snatched the little kid away from his father and put the kid down behind him. Then Murdoch swiveled back."Emmy, I like to freeze the memory in my mind and just look at Murdoch. He was a medium kind of man. Medium height, medium build, hair shaved close to the skull. You wouldn't look twice--until you have looked twice."He wasn't afraid. I noticed that right away about him.

"Rules of Survival" by Nancy Werlin deserves all the high praise it has been getting from young and old alike. I loved it from the first page and couldn't put it down. How could I resist? This is such a compelling tale of psychological, emotional, and physical child abuse, and it is told so earnestly and believably from the eldest child's point of view. What makes this book is so devastatingly compelling is that the abuser is the children's mother. I don't want to give away the plot, or spoil any part of this wonderful tale by telling you any critical details. It is enough to say that this book is well-written, thrilling, and fast-paced. The characters are extremely believable. There is no doubt that Nancy Werlin is a master storyteller. But I do want to make one matter perfectly clear: yes, their mother is mentally ill, but please don't be misled by other reviews to think that she is a bipolar (a modern term for manic-depressive illness) or psychotic. Perfectly normal-acting persons with bipolar illness surround all of us every day. This illness can be treated very successfully by medication. It would be wrong of you to think that Nikki's actions are those of person suffering from bipolar illness. And psychotic...well, if Nikki were psychotic she'd be a lot worse than what she is here in this novel, and true psychotics are a lot rarer. No, Nikki is one of those unfortunate persons with borderline personality disorder (BPD)...and they are more common. It is a term that sounds innocent enough, but it's as close to psychotic as you can get and still be seen by most folks as somewhat normal. It is an illness that cannot be cured by medication, and psychiatric talk-therapy has had little success with this biologically hard-wired condition.

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