



# READING GUIDE

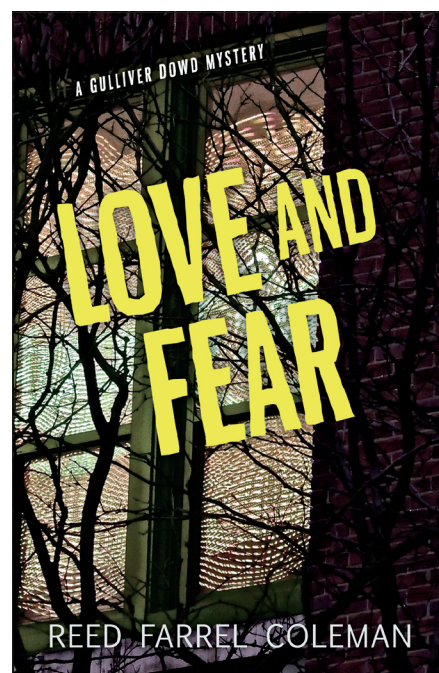
## LOVE AND FEAR REED FARREL COLEMAN

Reading level: 2.7

Interest level: Adult

Themes: crime fiction, kidnapping,  
private investigator, male sleuth, little people,  
New York City, NYPD, the mob, corruption

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### Summary

*Love and Fear* opens with Gulliver Dowd feeling alienated and angry. He has grown apart from his girlfriend Mia after having been forced by mafia boss Joey Vespucci to choose between keeping Mia safe or learning more about the murder of his sister, Keisha—a murder that has haunted him every single day since Keisha died. Gulliver is wracked with guilt over his decision and, feeling like he has betrayed his sister in some way, can no longer enjoy spending time with Mia.

With this bad blood between him and Vespucci, Gulliver is not particularly eager to help when Vespucci's main henchman, Tony, shows up at Gulliver's place one day. Vespucci's youngest daughter Bella has gone missing and he needs Gulliver's help. Gulliver refuses. But when Tony confesses that Bella is actually his own daughter, through his on-again/off-again love affair with Vespucci's wife Maria, Gulliver decides to help—in return for the information that will help him put a lid on Keisha's murder. Tony accepts the bargain.

Gulliver is a little person, short and awkwardly constructed. He is also fantastically well trained at taking down criminals—and he's good at finding runaways. Tony provides information to begin tracking Bella, including information about her school, the Fashion Institute of Technology. Gulliver calls on Ahmed Foster, an ex-Navy Seal and his unofficial partner, to help. In order to keep Tony's secret and put himself out ahead of the other PIs who have been assigned the case, Gulliver has a carefully constructed conversation with Vespucci so that the don himself agrees to Gulliver's involvement.

Gulliver, Tony and Ahmed begin at Bella's apartment building in Brooklyn. Gulliver's suspicion is piqued when he connects Bella's ransacked apartment to the building superintendent. But the state of the girl's apartment points to more than just a petty thief grabbing the most valuable items for pawning. Someone other than the building superintendent has also taken things: photos and artwork from the walls. Someone wanted it to seem like Bella left of her own accord.

Gulliver sets a top-notch hacker on the trail—Happy Meal, a kid he saved from the streets when he first started out as a PI. As Happy Meal gets to work, Gulliver goes to the FIT campus to speak with Bella's roommate, Niki. Niki tells Gulliver about a stylish, aging man who had at one time given her a message for Bella.



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Tony and Ahmed gather more information about Bella's boyfriend and about the aging man who used to hang around her building. Gulliver wonders whether one of Joey's own men has used Bella as a pawn in a bid for more power. Or perhaps her disappearance could be the work of a foreign gang?

Gulliver is attacked in the dark by a man with a baseball bat. He scares the man away—but the close call makes him realize that life is short, and that he misses Mia. When they talk, Gulliver is devastated to learn she plans to move back to Michigan—without him.

When Gulliver figures out who came after him, he confronts the man—Stevie Flax, one of the other PIs who had been put on Bella's case. He assigns Tony and Ahmed to do another round of talks with Bella's classmates and professors to gather more information about the older man. The boyfriend turns out to be a red herring. Gulliver visits all the foreign gangs to determine if anyone would have wanted to seek revenge against Vespucci with his daughter, but none do.

Happy Meal hacks into Bella's website, which has a gallery of her art, and shares with Gulliver messages showing Bella was being stalked by Igor Telenovich, an aging college art instructor who had stumbled onto her website years earlier and begun buying her art, and whose admiration had turned into obsession. Gulliver believes Telenovich has Bella. They go looking for Telenovich, but he's only interested in finding Bella to apologize for his obnoxious messages, and to let her know he's found a major art dealer to carry her work.

Gulliver finds it odd that Bella's mother hasn't been in touch; usually mothers are the most anxious when a child goes missing. When he meets with the handsome fiftysomething woman—and Tony—Maria Vespucci reveals how she helped free Bella from her predetermined misery as a mob princess by helping her make a getaway. But Vespucci is standing in the shadows nearby, and hears the whole thing. He vows to go after Bella. Maria is aghast. When Tony reveals Bella's paternity, Vespucci strikes his wife. Tony shoots Vespucci dead, then is shot himself by the mob goons. Maria is left with neither of the men she loved, nor her youngest daughter, and Gulliver is left without his answers.

### Questions for Discussion

1. Talk about the title of this book. Why *Love and Fear*? How do these two concepts interrelate, both in the book and in real life?
2. Gulliver Dowd says he owes much of who he is today to the fact that his sister was murdered. Why are negative experiences so much more powerful in shaping a person than positive experiences?
3. In chapter 2, we learn that Gulliver detests other people's pity. Think about a time when you felt pitied. Why does pity bother us so much?
4. Gulliver says women love wounded men (ch. 2). Discuss.
5. List the ways in which Gulliver Dowd is a fair man. Name as many as you can.
6. In *Love and Fear*, the author uses language that shows rather than tells the reader how the characters are feeling. Here's an example from chapter 3:

*As Tony spoke, he seemed hurt and angry. He kept clenching and unclenching his fists. His top lip twitched. His eyes turned mean and cold. Ice cold.*

Find other examples of this type of "showing" language in the book.



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7. What do you think is at the root of Joey “Dollar Menu” Vespucci’s nickname?
8. In chapter 6, Gulliver marvels at how neighborhood trends change over time. When he was growing up, none of the young generation wanted to live in Brooklyn—they all wanted to be in Greenwich Village or SoHo. But now all the hipsters want to be in Brooklyn. What compels humans to rejuvenate old, falling-down urban areas?
9. Gulliver thinks about why kids run away, reflecting that love wasn’t always enough to protect kids from the demons (ch. 6). What does he mean?
10. Rather than depicting his daughter as sad or lonely, Tony accurately reflects her as enjoying her own company, and not needing the company of others. Gulliver calls this “self-contained” (ch. 6). Is our world generally friendly or generally hostile toward this way of being? Why?
11. How does Gulliver Dowd’s commitment to following up the smallest details help him solve his cases?
12. Find examples of how the author brings Gulliver Dowd to life. What parts of the narrative help us to understand this complex character’s inner world? How does this make for a richer story?
13. In chapter 14, Tony tells Gulliver that sometimes love only comes around once or twice. He tells him to do whatever he can to keep Mia, and that without love, nothing else is worth it. Do you agree? That love only comes once or twice and that nothing is worthwhile without it?
14. In chapter 19, Gulliver reflects that he should never have ignored his intuition—the little voice inside his head:

*It had bothered Gulliver from the beginning, but he had chosen to ignore the voice in his head. That alone should have gotten his attention. **Every time he ignored his instincts, he got in trouble.** Or he wound up doing twice the work to get to the same place. By no means was the voice in his head always right. He wasn’t a seer. He could not predict the future. Most of the time he had trouble making sense of the past.*

Do you agree with the bolded sentence as it pertains to your own experience? Explain.

15. As you see it, what is the theme of *Love and Fear*?

