

Not Love: A Study of Family Betrayal and the Deception of Affection

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Book Information

The novel *Not Love* is a contemporary romance work written by Quenliiiiiii and published in 2025 by Blackswan Books. It is presented in paperback format and consists of approximately 304 pages. The book is written in Bahasa Indonesia and targets young adult and adult readers who are interested in modern romantic fiction. As a printed edition released through an independent publisher, the novel is distributed through online bookstores and selected retail platforms. The International Standard Book Number (ISBN) assigned to this edition is typically listed in its publication details to facilitate cataloging and academic referencing; students are advised to verify the exact ISBN (978-623-84843-4-3) from the physical copy or the publisher's official listing to ensure citation accuracy. The book's cover design and layout reflect contemporary popular fiction trends in Indonesia, and its publication marks the transition of the author's work from digital writing platforms into formal print circulation, thereby establishing its bibliographic legitimacy for academic review and critical analysis.

Keywords: *Family Betrayal; Young Adult romance; Self-discovery*

INTRODUCTION

In Indonesia's ever-evolving popular literature, few narratives have been able to bridge the gap between digital platforms and print like Quenliiiiiii's novel, *Not Love*. Originally popular in the Alternative Universe on Instagram, the novel's transition to print underscores its significant resonance with a younger demographic. This review examines the text within the context of contemporary Young Adult romance, exploring its relevance to the dynamics of romantic relationships and psychological healing. The review aims to analyze how the author balances the tropes of the romance genre with a thoughtful depiction of character growth and emotional recovery. The author also demonstrates that what always gives love away is that it is "Not Love".

The novel *Not Love* by Quenliiiiiii is a contemporary Indonesian romance that explores emotional complexity within modern relationships. Published in 2025 by Blackswan Books, the novel has gained attention among young adult readers for its relatable themes and dramatic tension. As a work that transitioned from digital writing platforms into print publication, it reflects the growing influence of online literary communities in shaping today's popular fiction. This review aims to critically examine the novel's narrative structure, characterization, thematic depth, and overall literary quality. By analyzing both its strengths and weaknesses, the review seeks to evaluate how effectively the author conveys the central ideas and whether the novel succeeds in delivering meaningful insight beyond conventional romantic storytelling.

SUMMARY OF THE BOOK

Not Love centers on the life of Ruby, a young woman who grows up in what appears to be a perfect family, surrounded by abundant love and affection from her parents. In her

romantic life, Ruby is equally fortunate; she has a partner named Prince, who is gentle, attentive, and present in every situation. However, this perfection and fortune are shattered when Cleova—Ruby’s cousin and a figure from Prince’s past—arrives and disrupts the household that was once filled with love. Gradually, numerous secrets are unveiled, including the revelation of fake love given by those closest to her. The deep wounds inflicted and the exposed secrets lead Ruby to a profound realization: not everything that claims to be love is actually love. Ultimately, the narrative poses the critical question of who among Ruby’s closest relatives has been feigning affection and the motives behind this deception that has befallen her.

The novel *Not Love* by Quenliiiiiii centers on Ruby, a young woman who grows up in what appears to be a loving and stable family environment, shaping her idealistic understanding of romance and commitment. From the beginning of the story, Ruby’s life seems nearly perfect, especially her relationship with Prince, a man she deeply loves and trusts. Their relationship is portrayed as affectionate, supportive, and full of promise, reinforcing Ruby’s belief that she has found a genuine and lasting love. The narrative gradually establishes the emotional foundation of their bond, showing shared dreams, intimate conversations, and the sense of security Ruby feels whenever she is with him. However, beneath this seemingly flawless relationship, subtle signs of imbalance begin to appear. Prince’s occasional emotional distance and unexplained past create small cracks in Ruby’s confidence, though she initially dismisses them in order to preserve her image of a perfect romance. The stability of Ruby’s world begins to falter when Cleova, someone connected to Prince’s past, reenters his life. Cleova’s presence is not merely incidental; she represents unfinished history, unresolved emotions, and truths that Prince has never fully disclosed. Ruby finds herself caught between trust and suspicion as she senses that her relationship is no longer as transparent as she once believed. The tension intensifies as misunderstandings, jealousy, and half-revealed secrets accumulate, slowly transforming Ruby’s certainty into doubt.

As the story progresses, the emotional conflict deepens and the narrative shifts its focus toward Ruby’s internal struggle. Cleova’s reappearance forces long-buried realities to surface, exposing that Prince’s past relationship was far more significant than Ruby had been led to believe. What initially appears to be simple jealousy evolves into a complex web of deception, pride, and unresolved attachment. Ruby confronts not only Prince but also herself, questioning whether her love has been based on honesty or illusion. Conversations between the characters become more confrontational, revealing contrasting perspectives on loyalty, forgiveness, and emotional responsibility. Prince attempts to defend his actions by minimizing the significance of his past, while Cleova’s behavior oscillates between regret and subtle provocation, further destabilizing Ruby’s emotional state. Throughout this phase of the novel, the author highlights Ruby’s psychological transformation. She transitions from a trusting and dependent partner into someone who begins to demand clarity and self-respect. The pain of betrayal—whether emotional or factual—forces her to reconsider the meaning of love. Is love simply about holding on despite flaws, or does it require transparency and accountability? The escalating conflicts culminate in a pivotal confrontation where hidden truths are finally revealed. Ruby learns that certain decisions Prince made were influenced by unresolved feelings and fear of loss, rather than genuine commitment. This revelation shatters Ruby’s previous understanding of their relationship, compelling her to face the possibility that what she believed to be pure love might have been sustained by denial and selective truth.

In the final section of the novel, the narrative emphasizes resolution and self-

realization rather than dramatic revenge or exaggerated tragedy. Ruby undergoes a period of emotional withdrawal, reflecting on her values and redefining her expectations of love. Instead of portraying her solely as a victim, the story frames her growth as an act of empowerment. She begins to recognize that love without honesty cannot provide the security she once imagined. Prince, confronted with the consequences of his secrecy, must decide whether he is willing to take responsibility for rebuilding trust or accept the loss of the relationship. Cleova's role diminishes as the focus shifts back to Ruby's agency and emotional clarity. The ending does not rely entirely on grand romantic gestures; rather, it underscores the importance of self-worth and emotional boundaries. Whether Ruby ultimately reconciles with Prince or chooses a path independent of him, the central message remains consistent: not every intense emotion qualifies as genuine love. The title, *Not Love*, encapsulates this realization, suggesting that attachment, habit, or fear of loneliness can easily be mistaken for authentic affection. Through Ruby's journey from certainty to disillusionment and finally to self-awareness, the novel presents a reflection on modern romantic relationships and the fragile line between loving someone and merely clinging to the idea of love.

CRITICAL EVALUATION

One of the best things about *Not Love* is how it breaks down the idea of a "perfect life". Quenliiiiiii does a great job placing the easy start of Ruby's family life and her bond with Prince right next to the sudden mess Cleova creates. That stark difference really shows how easily trust can break. Cleova really gets things moving in the story. Because she's part of the family but also a romantic rival, the main character has to face some tough stuff they probably didn't want to. This book really gets to the heart of something important: sometimes what we call "love" isn't actually good for us. It helps younger folks especially figure out the difference between real, caring affection and someone just trying to control them. That's a pretty big idea for a book to explore in this genre. However, the way the story is told has some weak spots. While the family secrets really amp up the drama, when all those truths come out, it sometimes feels like things move a bit too fast. Things go south really fast in the house, from good times to a lot of suspicion all at once. This might make it hard for readers to really get a feel for Ruby's trauma because there isn't much time for emotional development. Additionally, the use of the "ex from the past" trope combined with a manipulative family member is a pretty standard setup in romance stories. This book does a good job with it, but it's a familiar path we've all seen before.

Even with all its typical parts, the book still offers some important ideas about gaslighting and emotional betrayal. When we zoom in on the betrayal coming from someone in the family, the story becomes more than just a typical breakup; it really digs into some messy family stuff. The whole "fake love" idea really makes characters, and us readers too, rethink what real love is all about. So, *Not Love* is worth checking out because it mixes a romantic thriller vibe with a coming-of-age experience, all about figuring out that sometimes, what you think is love is actually just "Not Love".

REFLECTION & CONCLUSION

Not Love really digs into how easily trust can break and the painful truth of family backstabbing. It's really useful because it helps young readers see their own struggles reflected, especially when they're dealing with relationships that seem great from a distance but are actually pretty bad up close. This book really adds something important to Young Adult stories it gets past just surface-level romance and digs into tough stuff like gaslighting

and figuring out what real affection even means. It's like a mirror for readers, helping them see the difference between controlling actions that people might call "love" and actual, healthy caring. This is definitely for folks who love a good emotional drama or romance, especially if they enjoy a story with some real psychological depth. If you like stories where characters really grow and change, and you also enjoy a good romantic thriller, this one's for you. It really gets into the characters' heads. So, to wrap things up, I really suggest "Not Love". It's got guts, you know? It tells you that sometimes what we think is love really isn't, and figuring that out, then having the courage to leave, is actually the best way to get to know yourself.

REFERENCES (if any)

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