



4 to 16 Characters

Kelly Hourihan

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Fifteen-year-old Jane Shilling's best friends don't know her real name. In fact, they don't know anything about her at all. Jane's life has collapsed in the last few years; following the death of her mother, her father turned to drinking, and Jane is reeling from the double blow. To escape, Jane devises a number of online personas, each with a distinct personality, life history, and set of friends. But things become trickier when she finds herself drawing close to some of her online friends, and winds up struggling with the question of how to maintain a real friendship while masquerading as a fake person. With the help of Gary, a socially awkward classmate and competitive Skee-ball player who is Jane's only offline friend, and Nora, her therapist, Jane begins to sift through her issues. The only catch is that that involves taking a long, hard look at what her life's like when the computer is shut off, and that's a reality she's been fighting for years.

4 to 16 Characters Details

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From Reader Review 4 to 16 Characters for online ebook

Rebecca says

I've had this on my Kindle for so long and each time I try to get into it, it never goes too well. I've given it a few chances since I got it for review, and I'd rather finish them if I can, but realistically this just isn't for me. I liked the Internet aspect and it's a fun, quick read. I can see why people have enjoyed it but it's just not really my kind of book - at least not now. It's one of the many books I think my younger self would have been into a lot more.

If you like books about the online world and fun, cute YA contemporaries with humour then look into this. I just personally wasn't invested in the characters and struggled to get into it.

Michelle says

When 4 to 16 Characters popped up on my reading list, I was really excited to see a book written outside the normal prose form. I think something that breaks the status quo is a huge bonus for young adult books, as students are drawn to the unique and unusual. Lately, I've seen several narratives written through a long series of poems, but I like that Hourihan went a different direction- writing the whole book through online interactions and posting. The tale is told through Jane's private digital journal entries, her posting on fan-fiction web pages, her IMs with friends (and eventually her therapist) and her email exchanges at her high school.

Jane's real life is more than a bit of a mess. Her mother died a year before the book begins and her father has since spiraled into depression and alcoholism, leaving her to fend for herself, a job she isn't emotionally equipped to undertake. She already attends a special high school, Spectrum, for students with social and learning disabilities, but things quickly degenerate as she feels trapped at school and at home. To relieve the pain of both places, she enters a new world- the digital one. After creating a series of online personalities, Jane retreats to internet forums and fan fiction sites, where she can choose her persona each day. Soon, Jane's days revolve around these online interactions, her real-world ones breaking down even further.

See the rest of this review (and more!) at www.insearchoftheendofthesidewalk.com

Kat says

Sometimes the synopsis of a book gives too much of the storyline away. Sometimes it doesn't give you enough information about the book to decide if it's really the book for you. The synopsis of 4 to 16 Characters made it sound like the perfect book for me – YA realistic fiction about a girl who spends far too much time online? Great – the type of book I almost always enjoy, and a girl who probably has some obsessions rather similar to my own.

The whole story is told through social media – chat rooms, forums, online diary entries, snapshots of Jane's inbox which shows the escalation of her life falling apart whilst she hides herself online, her very cute friendship with Gary and her interactions with her therapist, and it's all actually very telling about Jane's

personality and coping skills.

What 4 to 16 Characters' synopsis doesn't mention, however, is that Jane spends most of her time online writing FanFic and chatting in FanFic forums. And honestly, that probably would have put me off a little, because it's part of the online world I know nothing about and don't have a particular yearning to learn about. And although it's not the WHOLE book, I was completely lost in the terminology, the politics and the workings of the whole thing – totally beside the fact it's about FanFic for an apparently fictional TV show. But I didn't dislike this book – in fact some of it I found quite compelling and relatable – Jane hides behind her online personalities rather than face the reality of her real world. She makes up personas to feel like part of her life is completely in control, whilst her father struggles to just make it through the day, her school life is falling apart, and she has very little interaction with the outside world. Her obsession with being permanently connected to the internet at every possible moment is also one that I think a lot of us would recognise or at least understand – the feeling of disconnection when she's not online, how what is happening when she is not there starts to influence her offline life.

Although this wasn't an outstanding read for me, there are a lot of parts of the story that are probably very recognisable to many of us, and it was easy to get sucked into the plot and wanting to know how it would turn out for Jane in the end. A quick, unique read, I enjoyed 4 to 16 Characters for the majority – but I still don't get FanFic....

Tina says

I think the main problem with this book was that I read it the same week as I read Fangirl by Rainbow Rowell. Both books are about teenage/young adult women who are involved in fandom and how online presence affects their life but the difference was I liked Cath (in Fangirl) and I completely and utterly hated Jane, plain Jane or thejanethe. Jane is a teenage girl who invents characters on the internet to escape her real life and as the story unfolds we see how this invention begins to creep up on her reality.

But the problem is Jane is an unreliable narrator. And the thing with unreliable narrators is exactly that – they're unreliable. Told solely through a manipulative teenager, who uses multiple characters to pretend and befriend, we never really see who Jane is or can trust that this narrative, the plain Jane, is the truth. Although we get more of Jane's 'personality', extremely reactive and quite negative, revealed I was never sure if thejanethe was the real personality or just another fake another person had created.

Stylistically, I loved the idea of the book. I loved the idea of a book that showed the current media trends and it was used to good effect particularly when Jane is IM-ing "real friend" and "Rachel" is IM-ing her online friend at the same time. That did show the tension and the frantic pace of trying to keep up a lie. But the style of the novel is not particularly e-friendly, it tends to clog up and you lose a lot of the style of the narrative.

This book would've got 2.5 stars from me if it rated like that here on Goodreads but I just couldn't give it a 3. While I wanted to finish the book, to find out what happened I wasn't emotionally invested in the characters. The only thing really interesting was the ending, really has Jane learned anything? Possibly not.

Megan Hodgson says

I would like to thank NetGalley and Lemon Sherbert Press for the ARC of this book! I really appreciate it!

Okay. I have been stewing about this review for a few days now, so I think I am finally ready to write this puppy.

1. This book was interesting. I love the format of blog posts, e-mails, chat sites, etc to tell the story.
2. This book was not e-reader friendly. If you are going to get it, I hope you have an e-reader with a way bigger screen than I did (although, I do have a Kobo Mini), or are willing to buy the paper copy. Some of the charm of the storytelling was lost on an e-reader.
3. I do not know why this book was called 4 to 16 characters. Very likely I missed the reason.

Okay. Let's get this review really started. I really really really wanted to love this book. I am a student teacher and am always looking for books with characters who are relatable to "traditional situations" (like characters that don't have both parents and go to a different school than what is considered "normal" in North America and so on). However, I found that although one alternate online personality was a great idea for a character, switching to other characters in the dialogue of the story was unnecessary, unclear, and confusing.

I also felt like the whole idea of the fan fiction and writing to cope with your "real life" was great, but was way too heavy in the story.

I would have loved this book more if the last like 20% of the book was the majority of the book and the other 80% of the book was cut way down. The first while the book was just decent, I was intrigued to see what happened next but it wasn't like gripping me.

And then the last part of the book happened, and I loved it. I was moved, I was crying, and I was totally absorbed in the story. It was like the writing was taken to another level and the story just fell together.

So... I can't decide what to rate this book. The first part of the book was a 2/5, but the last bit was WAY above that. Like 4.5/5. And there is a chance that I would have loved it more if it was a paper copy, or if I had twice the size of a screen to read on.

I'm going to land on a 3/5 for this book. I want to discover more books with a lot of these elements of story, and I really don't think this book was a bad read. It just wasn't consistently great.

Jillyn says

4 to 16 Characters is a book that follows teenager Jane as her life sinks into a dark place. Her mother has passed away and her dad's hit the bottle to cope, and Jane isn't all too sure what to do with it. She hates life, hates school, hates people in general. The one thing she doesn't hate? The internet and fanfiction. She escapes into the world of fake profiles on the internet, pretending to be someone she's not to deal with it all. She struggles with this as she makes a "real life" friend, and she has to learn how best to take care of her problems.

I really like the concept of this book. This book isn't written in standard prose, but in the form of emails, blog posts, and other forms of modern social media. I also liked the idea of a main character that toys around with false identities online. I practically live on my computer, and I know this is a thing that occurs more often than most think. However, there was one main disconnect for me that made me not enjoy this book: the main

character.

Connecting to a character is something that's extremely important to me and my reading experience. And while I can relate to Jane in some regards, I largely just couldn't stand her. I understand that the point of her "catfish" tendencies on the internet are to help her cope with stressful real life events. I don't blame her. I became addicted to the internet after my parents' divorce for similar reasons (though with no fake profiles). But I found her brooding and hatred for, well, everything, to be over the top. I found myself thinking, "Okay, I get it, you're unhappy". I didn't think her writing was very good for being a fanfiction author. I understand a lot of this is "written" online, but it was irritating to read her private dialogue with herself.

Unlike Jane, I don't dabble in writing fanfiction. However, I do post in online role-playing forums. So, I am familiar with the online hierarchies among users- how some are royalty and others running jokes. I thought that bit was fairly well represented. There are some people that you never want to upset, and others that you want to befriend so you can be in the inner circle. I immediately thought of a few people when Jane mentioned this construct. However, because I am in a different corner of the web so to speak, I was kind of lost at parts. She mentions writing a "drabble"- something I had to look up. I've never heard a short writing referred to as this in my communities, nor had my girlfriend. The book assumes you have a working knowledge of how it all works when I honestly don't.

There were quite a few things I liked about this book individually, but when brought together it just wasn't the book for me. I think that if you are in the fanfiction area of the internet, you may like it more than I did. Thanks to Netgalley and Lemon Sherbet Press for my review copy. This review can also be found on my blog, Bitches n Prose.

Sojourner says

By the end of the story I realized this could true of so many teenagers around the world. Why only teenagers? It could be the story of so many of us, even older folks. Though I can't keep the book in that special reserved book-shelf, as it is a digital copy, or categorized it as one of my favorites, the issue it deals with is relevant, and timely. And I'm glad that I have opted to review it.

4 to 16 Characters by Kelly Hourihan is the story of fifteen-year-old Jane Shilling, a high school girl, whose life is as messy as the drunken state of her father, who takes to drinking over a year ago after the death of Jane's mother. Left to fend for herself, Jane takes the online route to escape and created multiple identities. At any given time she assumes four to eight identities – like the lesbian Zelda, the suicidal Ethan, the studious Elana, the attractive Rachel, and a handful of other personas.

While she keeps reinventing online, a stressed-out Jane's real world is crumbling down even further. When the crisis level peaks, Jane is forced to look inside, and tries to reconnect with the real world. With the help of Gary, her only offline friend, and Nora, her therapist, Jane painfully returns to her real self.

What is unique about the book is the manner it is written. Though we have first person accounts, much of the story is written in the form of emails, blog posts, IM chats, forum posts and Tumblr posts. 4 to 16 Characters is a book that explores the issues of grief and friendship through the story of Jane Shilling. It is a story that will resonate with online-addicts and people going through a period of grief.

Kim says

Well, this was unpleasant. This is the story of a vicious and viciously lonely teenager. And given that, I'm sure you can imagine that it was not a fun or enjoyable reading experience.

The story is told entirely through journal entries, "ReCirclr" (read: Tumblr) entries, emails and IM conversations. I don't think this is automatically a bad thing and might even be an effective story telling tool if the main character, and also the story, isn't terrible. The "protag", Jane, has had an admittedly rough go of things lately. Her mother died suddenly almost a year ago and her dad has succumbed to his alcoholic past. Jane herself, while very intelligent (supposedly), does have a non-verbal learning disorder (we're never informed what it is) and attends a private school that addresses her needs. Unpopular, bullied, depressed and lonely, Jane has resorted to creating a stable of different personalities that she hides behind on various social networks in order to avoid being who she is.

You'd think all of this would lend to a great amount of sympathy for this character. You'd be wrong. She is petty and cruel with very little in the way of redemptive qualities. She is supposed to be intelligent but shows a shocking disconnect between her actions and their consequences. For instance, Jane stops handing in her math homework simply because she no longer feels like doing it. When her teacher reports to the administration that Jane is in danger of failing she opines that the teacher "should be glad I'm not kicking over desks in the middle of class." The teacher should just be grateful Jane isn't violent instead of ratting on her! Geez. Some people.

I think the Tumblr/emails/IMs, etc., angle could even have been interesting. But it really fell flat unfortunately. We are occasionally "treated" to samples of Jane's fanfiction and it is just unbelievably boring. Fanfiction about a fake show that is not in the least bit interesting. The IM conversations between her alters and her friends about this fictional TV show are equally uninteresting. The pages and pages of textspeak IMs gets old real fast as well.

By 40% Jane has, thankfully, been forced into professional therapy sessions. She is as obstinate and bratty as ever doing as much as she can to prevent the therapist from helping her. At about 95% when I think we're supposed to be having a "revelation", the therapist has an exceedingly kind opinion of Jane that the text doesn't justify. I think it is supposed to be conveying to Jane that she is lovable after all and even if she did cruel things she didn't *mean* to be cruel and so there is a difference. I guess the therapist doesn't know about what Jane did to the counselor at her school:

Concerned for Jane's behavior, missing school work and repeat absences, her counselor sets up meetings with Jane. Jane doesn't want to go so what does she do? Why, she Googles the poor woman to dig up some dirt and boy does she find it. In the next session she essentially bullies the poor counselor into a sobbing mess by bringing up her ex-fiance who married another woman within a year of their break up. What is Jane's reaction? From one of her journal entries:

"Can we just take a moment to note that I AM THE AWESOMEST PERSON IN THE WORLD. *|o/* *|o/* "

No. No, you are a terribly cruel person.

Nearer to the end Jane refers to the counselor as "that whore Ms. Meisner" because the woman called her Dad regarding the concerns she has about Jane. Very valid concerns.

I would much rather have read a book about a cruel and vindictive teenager who goes through the process of realizing her lies, her defenses, and her actions are wrong and begins the path to making things right in her life. A book about a terrible teen who goes through a transformation is a-okay. A book about a terrible teen who stays terrible and apparently learns nothing by the end...what on earth is even the point?

I've already written so much more about this book than I ever cared to. I could flesh this review out more with what was going on plotwise and whathaveyou but I simply just don't feel like it. It's not worth it.

I don't often regret reading a book, even if I disliked it. I regret this one. Ye be warned.

Renee says

Squandered Potential of a Great Concept

The concept of "4 to 16 Characters" by Kelly Hourihan is brilliant: a novel structured in the manner in which today's teens really communicate – through social media. However, the storytelling within this social media concept falls flat. The main character Jane is a teen not only coping with the sudden death of her mother, but with a disengaged father who eases his own pain over his wife's death by drowning himself in a bottle. While the "troubled family" plot line is somewhat cliché in young adult literature, I was hopeful that the presentation of this novel would be the redeeming quality that makes this story a study in great characterization and an illustration of the theme of overcoming life's most difficult obstacles. However, this is not the case.

Instead, Jane is about an unlikable character as they come. Not only are her mood swings extreme (and even predictable after the first two chapters), her attitude about multiple situations in her life make her overwhelmingly unlikable. Jane hates school, loathes her classmates, thinks all her teachers are "out to get her," despises her (first) therapist to the point of displaying an immense level of emotional cruelty toward her, and thinks very little of her father (which I'll give her, may be justifiable). Jane even spends half the novel complaining and mocking her new friend (and budding love interest) Gary, the only character willing to give her a chance, unless the reader counts Nora (therapist #2), who is the typical "I'm an easy going, cool adult that won't give up on you" stock character. In an element of irony, Jane even verbalizes what the reader is thinking – that Nora is exactly that, a cliché. (If nothing else, this should have served as notice to the author that a revision is needed.)

Now, it could be argued that as an adult reading this novel, I have missed the mark and lack an understanding of the main character and her experiences. I would disagree. I have known troubled students in my teaching career, many of whom deal with all sorts of horrific circumstances I cannot fathom, and I can say with certainty, though their attention-seeking/cry-for-help actions are sometimes questionable, they all still display a certain level of humanity and sympathy toward others. Jane does not; instead, she enters a level of self-absorption and self-righteousness that makes the reader question whether Jane possesses any redeeming qualities at all.

Part of what makes Jane so unsympathetic of a character has to do with her foray into the cyber world. Jane creates many different personas within this cyber world. One of Jane's long-standing cyber personas is

Rachel, a pretty and intelligent college student who has a nameless boyfriend that Rachel (Jane) only refer to as "the boy." Jane explains away the lack of a proper name for this fake boyfriend for a fake person as her own desire to not give a placeholder name to some male figure she hopes one day will fall in love with her in "real" life. Readers are easily able to infer that Rachel is an embodiment of someone Jane would like to be, and the fake boyfriend is a forced symbol of the love and interpersonal connection Jane longs for but does not have in her own life. There's the poetry loving scholar (whose name I can't recall), the direct proof that Jane isn't just a mean, troubled teenager – but a smart one at that! And then there's the Emo-Blogger (whose name I also can't recall, nor do I care to since he's such a cliché, outlandish, laughable character), who is meant to represent Jane's troubled, emotional, cry-for-help side. Though not a major component of the story, Jane's Emo-Blogger persona is illustrated with enough detail that even one of Jane's cyber friends makes fun of his dark, twisted emotions and writes him (Jane) off as cliché, pathetic, and attention-seeking. (Again, this is another ironic instance in which the author should have considered revision.)

There are also other issues I find troublesome with this novel. Particularly, I find the discussion of Jane's school, a special services educational institution named Spectrum, disturbing. As a reader, I understand Jane's feelings of Spectrum are a reflection of how she feels about herself, and that she is embarrassed by the labels such a school might bring. However, as an educator I do not appreciate the negative treatment of the school; in addition, Jane characterizes her peers as wild, unteachable, and unintelligent individuals who pretty much represent the lowest levels of humanity. (The character Gary is the exception.) This novel does not portray young people with different learning needs in a positive light. As a result, Jane only reinforces the labels which she so despises. I would like to think this is an instance of inner-conflict and illustrates the complexity of the character, but I'm not so sure. It doesn't read as such. Also, anyone not somewhat knowledgeable of special education services may be lost with references to certain terminology mentioned in the story, such as IEP's (individualized education plans). Most teens, which this novel's audience is geared to, will find themselves a bit confused. Overall, there is a better way to treat the references to special education services.

Another area that lost me as a reader was Jane's venture into the fan fiction universe. While this could have been an area where the novel's author displays her writing prowess, it ends up a missed opportunity in character development. This would have been the place for Jane to display her own intelligence and passion, which sadly we only see through her poetry loving cyber world persona. Instead, Jane's fan fiction universe becomes a distraction to the story and creates choppy to the plot. The only thing Jane gets out of this is more inner conflict and turmoil with other characters.

The area of this novel I was hoping to be the redeeming quality of the story was Jane's rediscovery of her past emails with her parents, especially those with her deceased mother. I feel this is where the author really let down the reader. It is with these emails between mother and daughter where something absolutely astounding and meaningful could have occurred. I was excited when Jane rediscovered these emails with her mother and really thought that this is where the novel is going to be great. I had visions of getting to know the "real Jane," discovering the special relationship she had with her mother, and even the reasons why Jane hides herself in the pseudo-reality of the Internet. Instead, these avenues were ignored by the author for more shallow, ineffective character and plot development.

My review of "4 to 16 Characters" by Kelly Hourihan is something I find unfortunate because I was initially excited by the novel's abstract which outlined the unique storytelling concept. Instead, this novel misses the mark on many levels. The title does not make much sense either. Is the author referring to "4 to 16 characters" as in the people Jane portrays in her cyber world? Or as in "4 to 16 characters" as in typographical characters for status updates? If the latter, then that would be an ineffective form of social media communication. The loathsome portrayal of the main character repels the reader, and the nature in

which special education services are referenced is insensitive at best. Perhaps somewhere there is an audience for this novel; however, one will not be found via my classroom library.

Note: I received a digital advanced reader copy of this novel from NetGalley in exchange for an honest review.

Jen (Feffer) says

Sigh. I was *really* enjoying this, up until about 21%, when the language started. I have a 3 F-bomb rule, and I even bent it a little, because I thought it might just be one scene/minor character, and I was dying to know what was going to happen. But: no. The hits just kept coming. :(

I did skip to the end to see if I could piece together what happened. It was that well-written. The plot was different, the characters sympathetic and colorful, and the voice fantastic. It's just a shame good writers feel they have to involve SO MUCH SWEARING for their fiction to seem "real."

Advanced copy received via Netgalley in exchange for an honest review.

Hannah says

I can't quite get my head around this book. I am torn with whether or not I liked this book. There were some good parts in the novel. I rather enjoyed the end. One of the few things I did like. I had trouble with reading the narrative. Jane's voice was very authentic. So authentic that I felt it was , at times, too juvenile. In retrospect, that is a good thing. It's not an easy thing to write in a child's voice when you are grown, and separated from that voice. I commend Hourihan for that; and will always be impressed. However, I felt lost within Jane's voice. Maybe more distant. I just wanted to get to the next page or chapter because she was irritating me at the page I was at. I skipped through a lot of her fan fiction diary entries. Some parts of her diary entries I glanced through, noncommittally.

I didn't truly know why she was at Spectrum; really why any of the characters mentioned were there. I could feel Jane's emotions, and her lack of empathy towards school. I just felt her behavior towards school was exaggerated. She hates her high school, a lot of adolescents do. It is curious how smart she is, under driven, and then uses the type of school she goes to to allow her behavior. Her math teacher is the only teacher you read about in the novel that truly tries to help her. Granted, in not a very productive way. But, Jane hates that this teacher does. Claims that the teacher is too tough for Spectrum standards since school is supposed to be like a joke for the kids that go there. Easy, helpful, not any way tough. She uses the one institution she is not fond of to protect her, and almost reward her for not trying. It made me dislike Jane more. And, when she does get a friend, Gary, she is just as awful, at first at least. I dislike her, then she becomes this reformed character I can't help but root for; in a subdued manner of course.

I would recommend this book if you like *The Curious Incident of the Dog at Night Time*. Also, if you enjoy child narratives. It isn't for everyone.

For full review, please go to indiewritergirl0329.wordpress.com

Dianne says

Right out of the gate, I'm going to say that the story and the message within is a heart-wrenching story of a young girl, lost in the grief of her mother's death and her father's inability to cope and be a parent. Jane is feeling lost, drifting, and is losing herself to her online personalities who have a better life in her mind than she has in reality. They have support systems, she does not. When the crisis level peaks, Jane is forced to look inside, while reaching outside of herself to connect with the "real world."

4 to 16 Characters by Kelly Hourihan will resonate with anyone who has lost themselves to grief, particularly if they were already floundering in the trials of the teen years. For those who are not familiar with online chat, the shortcuts, the abbreviations, it can be rather daunting to undertake reading this book. I would suggest concentrating on the conversations themselves, they are touching, they are enlightening and they tell the story of a young girl in pain, who is learning to come to terms with her life and facing it head on.

I received an ARC edition from Lemon Sherbet Press in exchange for my honest review.

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Soon to be Available at Amazon / Barnes & Noble / Kobo

For more reviews check out Tome Tender's Book Blog or find us on Facebook.

Lena Cox says

I received a free copy of the book in exchange for an honest review.

Can online relationships be trusted? Not talking Match.com relationships here, but the "friendships" created online in forums. Can online-only friendships equate to offline friendships? In real life, you know that even though your friend's screen name might be "tofuluva," you've eaten enough hamburgers with her to know that she's no vegan. Whereas the actual person behind the username "princesspea", could be a fat hairy 30-year-old guy wearing nothing but dirty tighty-whities who picks his nose with one hand, while typing his forum response with the other.

Or "princesspea" could be like Jane Shilling, the main character in *4 to 16 Characters* by Kelly Hourihan, a plain, brown-haired fifteen year old who escapes online to avoid her real life. But Jane doesn't go online as Jane. Online Jane is Zelda the "ass-kicking lesbian feminist", Ethan the suicidal emo kid, Elana the reflective academic, Rachel the college woman with the perfect life, or a handful of other personas.

Jane flees online to avoid her grief. Her mom has died. Her dad is a drunk. Whether by coincidence or by Hourihan's intention, Jane's online personas align with four of the five stages of grief that psychiatrist Elisabeth Kübler-Ross charted in "On Death and Dying." Zelda is anger, Ethan depression, Rachel denial, and Elana acceptance. The characters' online posts and discussions dance around Jane's grief, yet never directly address it. The characters buffer Jane from her grief's overwhelming intensity by being metaphors of what she's actually feeling.

Through an unlikely friend, a progressive therapist, and a fellow online fan fiction writer, Jane eventually tiptoes into real life grief. The trio helps Jane discover that disguising her grief will not eradicate it. They also help her to realize that her many online characters seek the same desire that Jane has in real life – to connect genuinely with others; yet, to do so Jane must own her true identity online and off.

The story explores grief, trust, and friendship. 4 to 16 Characters is a recommended read for teens coping with grief and for those helping the teen cope.

If you're online a lot, you'll be at home with the formatting of the book. Instead of narrative, Hourihan uses transcripts of instant messaging chats, emails, and online posts. The formatting aids the reader in determining which persona Jane embodies and deepens character development of Jane's offline friends. Give the story some pages to warm up to a decent pace. In the first quarter of the book, Hourihan lays the foundation of Jane's many personas. Once the foundation is in place, the story picks up pace culminating in, no joke, a skee-ball tournament.

4 to 16 Characters will be available in paperback and e-book on November 7, 2013 from Amazon, Barnes & Noble, and more.

~reviewed by PageCravings.com

Ashley says

Let me just say that NOWHERE in the blurb does it say anything about being all about writing fan fiction.

I do not write or read fanfic, so I was already lost 99% of the time. I don't live in Canada and while that doesn't necessarily mean anything, it took me Googling "Look to Tomorrow," to see if its an actual show there. It isn't. So this was essentially a fiction story about a fictional character who writes stories as fictional characters and about fictional characters. I was so lost, and by like the third chapter, I couldn't even bring myself to care about any aspect of the story. So, I quit.

When I first read the blurb, I thought it was going to be kind of like Lauren Myracle's "TTYL" series meets "Catfish" the tv show. In other words, a super cool idea for a book. Instead, I get a cray obsessed weird stalker writer emo chick, and while sometimes its okay to root for and care about the underdog, this story neither made me root for or care. Sorry. Definitely a D N F.

Received an ARC for honest review.

Ash Wednesday says

Grief like that-- grief stemming from the loss of a loved one, someone who is needed desperately, someone without whom one cannot imagine one's life -- it is limitless. It has no boundaries. It consumes. The idea that one can "cope with" such grief is a myth.

3.5 STARS

I am a bit of a dinosaur when it comes to fanfiction. I got into a couple of fandoms way back when, pre-P2P, pre-Twilight, pre-fanfiction.net now that I think about it (holy fuck I'm old!). I was mostly into anime fanfiction where most of the fanfics were circulated in emails as digests in the Yahoo Mailing Lists.

Then I graduated to Harry Potter when Harry/Hermione was still a majestic ship that I NEVER sailed (OBHWF represent!) and then I eventually graduated to being a tax-paying adult.

While I never really had her level of ~~obsession~~ passion and dedication for any of the fandoms I got into, I have met a couple of Janes in my short foray into them. So yeah I have that thread to connect with the heroine of this story, I get the sense of belonging to a community of like-minded creative individuals who love a certain show/character so much that its personal how they fight for their OTP and make up alternate universe stories and not think that's weird at all.

Except Jane, who also assumes several personas on line apart from her fanfiction writing, tries to reinvent a life outside her real one where her mother just died from a car accident and her dad is a miserable alcoholic. Characters that she created and brought to life in the internet with such meticulous detail, with files and transcripts to keep their stories straight, that I begin to wonder how many Jane Shillings am I actually friends with online?

Jane was an interesting heroine in that she truly was an insufferable dick. She was awful pretty much to everyone except when she's assuming one of her online personas. She's cut deep, she's lashing out and she's only tolerating everyone else, because she's better, smarter and can carry the burden of her grief all on her own. Yet despite her successful efforts to make me not like her, I cannot deny how this made her pain and sadness more palpable as the story progressed. Something about her determination not to be pathetic and pitiful keeps me from dismissing her antics entirely. It does feel a bit of a struggle to know her, see what she's really telling you behind the attitude and disturbing fandom naivete until some point in the end. She was sometimes fascinating, sometimes annoying but her pain resonates with honesty.

The buffet of storylines include her online friendship with Audra; her amusing real life, and complicated relationship with skeeballer Gary Huang (who I absolutely adored); her therapy sessions with the predictably unconventional Nora and her evolving conflict with her father. This was told solely from Jane's POV thru her blog posts, chat sessions and yes, even her fanfiction for the fictional TV show. While I love that because of this format **there was a lot of showing than merely telling**, there were one too many distractions for me to just focus solely on that.

The social media platform names have been changed because... I wasn't confused enough I guess? The fanfictions and drabbles (and I LOVE drabbles) that were supposed to give insight to where Jane's mind is at just came across fuzzy because the TV show it's about didn't get any ample introduction at all (not everyone watched Battlestar Galactica. Or was it Firefly?) so it was a chore to simultaneously understand what was happening and what its trying to reflect about Jane. The chat sessions also look cluttered in the pages making the conversations difficult to follow and the emotions they're supposed to convey registering belatedly.

thejanethe (2:14:43 AM): Just, I don't know. Don't you get tired of blending in with the world?

RawKdAsKEEbALL (2:14:45 AM): i don't try nemore

RawKdAsKEEbALL (2:14:48 AM): i just play skeeball n try 2 have fun :)

Entire chapters of that and I had a tough time following who said what. Dear publishers: formatting is your friend. Also did I mention how adorbs Gary Huang aka RawKdAsKEEbALL was?

Liking this book is really going to depend on how you piece this heroine together in what fragments she allows you to see. And I was resigned to round this up to 3 but couldn't. Not when the honesty in Jane's loneliness echoed ever so clearly over her OMGOMGOMGs blogging and general bitchery. And certainly not when I now know that Skee-ball was invented in 1909, the first tournament was in 1932 and its not a game for kids because it can lead to a dislocated shoulder.

Boom. 4 stars.

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