



# Drowning

*Matthew Hubbard*

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The lives of four college students twist together with psychological drama during the fall term of freshman year.

From the beginning, Aidan Sawyer is disturbed. His warped perception is the product of being bullied and teased. He lives in an apartment with Callie and Mia Burke—the typical, bickering sisters. Callie is the perfect daughter. She's smart and beautiful, and she can do no wrong. Mia is jealous of her sister and the attention she receives from their parents. She's willing to go out of her way to cast off the shadow she's been living in, even going to the extreme of performing at a strip club.

Meanwhile, Tom Harris gives into his sexual urges. He revels in living a double life of being a nice guy and one of promiscuity. A series of events is set into motion when Tom manipulates his way into Aidan's life.

Aidan spirals into madness as his dreams pull him into a Wonderland-esque world of his own imagining. Inner demons manifest themselves in the mirror, haunting him and taking control of his body. He attempts to exorcise them by self-infliction and succumbs to temporary highs as he rejects everything he's feeling.

Unable to trust anyone, Aidan finds himself alone. He grows desperate, looking for an escape route. His life has become a rip current, and it's pulling him under. He's drowning. He can't keep holding on. He wants to let go.

With his last breath, he only has one decision to make: sink or swim?

## **Drowning Details**

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## From Reader Review Drowning for online ebook

### **Breanna says**

Really Good Book!

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### **Desmin says**

Such an awesome read! This book will definitely pull you in with the first few pages, making it difficult to put down. I think I could personally identify with a few aspects of each character. This is a story that will invoke almost every emotion with each turn of the page.

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### **Matt Cromer says**

Having finished Drowning: First off I'd like to say thank you. Thank you for not sugar coating such serious issues. It's a welcomed change to have someone so accurately discuss and depict such monumental decisions as coming out in the case of Tom and Aiden, or Mia trying to find herself in sex and being wanted. So many authors paint this very unrealistic picture of what those characters went through. I loved that instead of finding small things about the book that were similar to my life I found a story that I could have written myself. The depression Aiden feels was so incredibly real because it was for you I am guessing. I found myself remembering what it was and is like to struggle with who you are, who you love and what you feel. I appreciated that you didn't hold back, you told the story in such a way as to convey life versus fiction. So many stories go for the obvious attention grabber be it sex or over done love. You made this book not only interesting but you did so without selling some gimmick. I can't praise the story enough. I appreciate that someone else went through things similar to myself and countless others, and then chose to share a story that can make a difference.

All the best

@cromie

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### **Josh Rimpled says**

This movie was a horrible idea to read. Thanks for the free book goodreads, however, I made it through the first 50 pages and it reminds me of how ignorant some people can be. We get it, you were bullied, next time you choose to write a book and self publish it, just title it your memoirs. Hell, even your middle school English teacher could have done a better job at editing. Ridiculously written. Whoever left the review. "the next breakfast club" or whatever is on his website- is nowhere near applicable to this book. Hence why it doesn't have a news outlet source to back it up. Your fans are your fans. Must be someone who loved seeing you in drag. Do us a favor, don't quit your day job.

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## **Andy says**

I have won this book through the Goodreads giveaway. Thank you!

I will edit this review after I have read it.

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## **Shawn says**

I've had this book on my Kindle for a while, and I'm so glad I finally got a chance to sit down and read it. What really surprises me is how quickly I was able to get through it. I'm a fairly slow reader, and at over 400 pages, I was planning on at least a five days to a week. But I found myself getting entirely invested in the plot and needing to know what would happen next, and in just two sittings, it was over. With four main characters to follow, their lives all intertwining in various ways, quite a bit goes down in this story; however, the plot never really became confusing and I was always interested to see what else would happen in the lives of these characters.

Speaking of the characters, I think this is another area of the book that is quite successful. If you're in college or were recently in college, the characters in this book are people that you are probably familiar with. Despite their disparate personalities, our four main characters all have one thing in common: they are all struggling with identity and figuring out their places in the world, and isn't that what college is all about? We get to spend one-on-one time with each of the four principle characters and get to know them pretty well, and as much as their stories engage with one another, each of them does have an individual arc that left me mostly satisfied. I do have to say here that the arcs of Mia and Callie feel the most complete, while those of Tom and Aidan left me wanting a bit more. We are told in the first chapter that Tom is tired of being the "golden boy" and wants to let loose a little, but we never see him in his golden-boy role before he makes the decision to embrace a new sort of libertine lifestyle, which makes the "change" seem almost nonexistent. And as for Aidan, I constantly felt a wall between him and me as character and reader. I was affected by how deeply damaged he is and by his methods of coping with that damage, but because I never really understood the exact cause of it, I found it hard to completely empathize with the way he's feeling. Not to mention, the (quite literal) *deus ex machina* in the denouement of his story and his almost instantaneous change of heart made his arc fall a bit flat. That being said, there are several moments in which I really did like him and felt happy for him.

Finally, to talk about the writing, I'd like to say that the way this book is written is a style that, as someone who studies creative writing in school, I am very familiar with. I've been called out on this way of writing myself in fiction workshops. Studying English and literature in college, there are certain kinds of texts that we read, from all different periods, and as such, when we set about writing our own work, some of those styles that we're used to studying inevitably work their way into our prose. In the dialogue, there are several times that I wish there were a contraction where the whole words are written out. The other thing that sticks out to me is the occurrence of slightly awkwardly phrased contractions like "I've not been..." when "I haven't been..." sounds more natural, especially for something that a college-aged person would say. Sometimes there are so-called "SAT words" used when something simpler would probably suffice. Another reviewer mentions the long descriptive passages; this isn't something that bothers me too much, but I have to admit I found myself skimming some parts to get to the next bit of dialogue. I would just urge people to keep in mind that this is a debut novel. What constantly shines through the text, for me, is the emotion behind the words. It's palpable. So it doesn't read like Dickens or Emerson, but there's a sense of truth behind every word in this book, and that's more beautiful to me than fancy flourishes of language.

In summation, *Drowning* is not without its flaws, but it is a commendable (and recommendable) piece that I think would speak to a lot of people struggling with self-acceptance. I'll conclude with what I thought about the most while reading the book: if Tom and Aidan get married one day, and Tom doesn't take Aidan's name to become a real Tom Sawyer, he will have missed a golden opportunity.

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## Danny says

This was a Goodreads giveaway that I received and I was glad to have read it. I have to admit, "*Drowning*" probably is not the sort of book that I would have picked up and read on my own. While the book has a gay theme to it, which nicely fits into most of my "to-read" list, the premise of the story, a slice of the lives of a group of 20-somethings, isn't normally my preference.

Having said that, I enjoyed the story.

I do have to agree with what another reviewer wrote, and that is the novel seems more an autobiography than a fictional work, but really, who cares? I enjoy reading a book for the story and the character development and the author's ability to suspend my disbelief for the duration of the book.

I am surprised at how quickly I read the book. I thought it would be a couple of weeks before I digested it all. Instead, after I started, I kept turning pages to see what would happen next.

The main characters could have been anybody or everybody. We all have been through events in our lives that, to the casual outsider, may seem unreal, but given our mindset and circumstances, is the best we can do at that moment in time. We have also all known the personalities portrayed in "*Drowning*," or at least fascimiles of those persons.

I am not sure that I really ever warmed up to Aidan, the protagonist, which isn't so surprising since he was written as an "aloof" and rather cold sort of guy. Oh, there were times I was rooting for him, but most of the time that I didn't understand him.

The secondary character, Tom, was a really cool guy, a person most readers might like to meet and become friends with. I liked him when he was being slutty and I liked him when he decided he wanted to settle down.

The sex scenes were tastefully done, not too porny. I would not be embarrassed if a house guest plucked the book off the shelf and started reading passages aloud.

I could do into the technical aspects of the book, but suffice it to say Matthew Hubbard, the author, can plot, create realistic characters and the action moves the book right along.

Warning: At 400 pages, the book is a meandering journey, but like I mentioned, I kept turning the pages and finished it in a weekend.

"*Drowning*" has its imperfections, but for a first novel, it's four-stars that are well-earned.

I am interested in seeing what Hubbard has in store for his readers in his next book.

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## **Karen says**

It was a nice comfort read. I'd like to read more about the lives of Tom, Aiden, Callie and Mia.

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## **Cheryl D says**

\* This was a Goodreads giveaway that I received.

How to start this review? I have pondered and debated for several days because Matthew seems like such a nice young man but I try to be honest with hope that he will learn something valuable from my insights. Of course, he is free to say she is an old coot who doesn't know what she is talking about...and that is okay too.

Drowning felt like an autobiography not a novel. The pain was so "out there in your face" that I believe the author must have experienced it himself in many if not most of the same ways.

The first thing I want the author to know is this...there are WAY TOO MANY descriptive paragraphs that are totally unnecessary and that do not enhance the writing in anyway. It reminded me of English students who are told "add more description/ add more adjectives" and so young Mr Hubbard took this to heart and did so on almost every page especially in the beginning of the book. One example would be these paragraphs on page 145.

*"He sat down on the sand. The evening sun beat down on his face as he focused on the waves. They rolled in, one by one...rising from the deep-the calm, marching in one by one. They gained momentum, pressure building higher and higher as they reached toward the sky-always trying to reach the sky.*

*The pressure was too much, and the surface broke. They fell. They stumbled, tripping and rolling and crashing into the bitter, hard shore. One by one they repeated the pattern, always stuck in a rut. They rose up, tempting the hand of fate."*

*As a former newspaper reporter I will say that one thing I learned is that the fewer words the better. Sure there are times that more words especially more descriptive words are needed. But to be effective they must be sparse so they have true meaning, depth and impact when read. I got to the point where I felt "oh gosh here we go again." It made the reading painful in this regard.*

*There are other parts of the book that I just had to put big ???? around paragraphs because they lost all meaning as they rambled on and on. I know what the author was attempting to do but it failed terribly. An example would be the last paragraph on page 37.*

*While I have a lot of criticisms regarding his writing style; I do think that Matthew Hubbard knows how to organize and develop a plot. I also think that he has something worthwhile to say. I suspect as Mr. Hubbard practices his craft and learns some of the finer points of writing a novel that we will be hearing from him in the future with stories that are important and make the reader ponder life and their role in it. I await his next offering with thanks for sharing this one!*

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### **Riccardo says**

I just finished reading it and I can only say I LOVED it. I even underlined some parts where I was astonished by the resemblance of the situation to what I also lived.

Only someone who lived what we have lived could portray in such a good way the feelings and sensations that people like us feel in that particular moment in life and I don't think this is something wrong. I don't think the author should have stayed more distant. It only adds more reality and depth to the story.

I really admire Matthew and his courage of speaking about all of this. I really hope his novel will also enlighten some young people who are living their condition as an incredible burden. This novel teaches something very very important that unfortunately, for those who can't accept their true self, is hard to discover and realize.

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### **Danelle says**

I really enjoyed reading this book. I like how it's written in first person for each character - it felt like I was reading diary exerts from them. Each of the characters felt like a friend. I applaud Matthew for his detailed descriptions about how someone feels going through something difficult. I think other readers can relate and know they are not alone.

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### **Yuzuru says**

"Drowning" is a psychological drama about four college students — Aiden, Callie, Mia and Tom. While Aiden is primary the focus of the story, who battles his inner demons and connects with the audience the most, we do get a fair share of how the rest of the characters deal with everyday life.

Congratulations to Matthew Hubbard on his first book, because this book is really amazing and easily became one of my favorites as I finished this in two sittings. The way the story perspective switches between all the characters helps you connect with each character and their troubled minds, and it keeps you on the edge of your seat.

We are presented four different kinds of psychological minds: Aiden, who is lost in his own madness of a mind. Callie, who is smart and beautiful yet finds it hard to accept herself. Mia, who is always shadowed by her sister, Callie, and wants to get out of that shadow. Tom, who wonders why was he born wanting men instead of women.

The book's main focus, however, is on Aiden and the way he battles against himself and his inner demons; and thus he ended up being the character I grew most fond of. Specifically, the chapters where Aiden was dreaming and lost in his own mess of utter despair is really where the psychological impact comes to play. The other three characters have their own little charm too and it was great reading how each of them grew up and changed by the end of the story.

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**Logan Williams says**

Wonderful plot! Kept me interested at all times. Interested as to how the Character's lives will intertwine. Can't wait to read more!

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