



Nothing

Robin Friedman

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"Sometimes trees can look healthy on the outside, but actually be dying inside. These trees fall unexpectedly during a storm." For high school senior Parker Rabinowitz, anything less than success is a failure. A dropped extracurricular, a C on a calc quiz, a non-Jewish shiksa girlfriend--one misstep, and his meticulously constructed life splinters and collapses. The countdown to HYP (Harvard, Yale, Princeton) has begun, and he will stay focused. That's why he has to keep it a secret. The pocketful of breath mints. The weird smell in the bathroom. He can't tell his achievement-obsessed father. He can't tell his hired college consultant. And he certainly can't tell Julianne, the "vision of hotness" he so desperately wants to love. Only Parker's little sister Danielle seems to notice that he's withering away. But the thunder of praise surrounding Parker and his accomplishments reduces her voice to broken poetry: I can't breathe when my brother's around because I feel smothered, blank and faded

Nothing Details

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From Reader Review Nothing for online ebook

Amy says

The main char is a teen (Jewish) guy who struggles with bulimia and meeting his own and parents' high expectations. Friedman does the issue justice. This is an important book because the idea that a male may struggle with an eating disorder isn't as readily discussed -- it's not just a girl thing, after all. I also learned a lot about the Jewish culture (the pressure to succeed, etc, that I knew existed but never read a story depicting it). The male voice is believable -- insecure and fragile under a mask of having everything under control.

The story is told in two POV's, alternating between Parker (the main char) and Danielle (his younger sister). The sister's perspective is told in verse, which I found a little annoying and jarring. I found myself skimming Danielle's parts it to get back to Parker's story. Then there was the dad suddenly getting diagnosed w/ breast cancer -- I felt this was too much. Having the main char struggling w/ what is normally perceived to be a "female" psychological disorder was one thing, adding this other unnecessary dimension (dad struggling w/ what is normally considered a "female" disease) was overkill and really took away from Parker's story, in my opinion.

All in all, this book was very readable. I give this book 3.5 stars, mostly for the topic.

Alex LaCrosse says

I was walking through the Sheboygan Falls High School's library looking for books but none were grabbing my attention. All the fonts were ones I've seen frequently used. The colors were blah and boring. Also the titles were unentertaining. With extraordinary irony the first book that caught my attention was titled Nothing. The first thing that came to mind was someone saying "What book are you reading?" and me responding "nothing." without being secretive or ignoring the person. The book was white/beige colored with plain blue writing saying "nothing". positioned about two inches down the spine of the book was the authors name; robin friedman. They are not capitalized and the font was plain Arial. Still ironic. But something about the book made me have to read it. It seemed like the author didn't want me to find it or read it by the way he presented the book. I opened up the book to see a countdown on the top of the page saying "88 days before" counting down every few pages. Intriguing was the word that my feelings reflected about this. It made me want to read more. I wont tell you another detail about this countdown just incase you were thinking about reading the book. The book opened up with a first person account from the main character whose name is Parker. You soon learn he has a sister Danielle who is also a first person narrator of chapters and one of the supporting characters. The book goes Parker, Danielle, Parker, Danielle.. and so on if you catch my drift. The opening sentence of nothing was a great way to catch a readers attention. I found out in the future that it was also foreshadowing. I had no clue. The opening sentence is "Puke". What a great start to a book. Characters start to develop on the first page. I got the impression that parker didn't like his family or his life because he says it outright. He also complains a lot. The story then flip-flopped on me! His sister Danielle tells me or any reader that Parker is a breaker of hearts and how her life sucks because Parker is so good. With continued reading into the book I realized characters and people in general think parkers life sounds wonderful from their perceptions but parkers perception is different. The funny thing is both perceptions are right and this is something I think the author is trying to make me think about. Parker is in all the advance placement classes in school. His class ranking is 1st. He is a star track athlete. Not to mention he's in many extracurricular and the president of a few clubs. Sounds like a great and promising life! So great his parents have him set up with a college advisor to get into Princeton. This is a main idea in the book. It puts so much pressure on Parker and this is why he doesn't like his life. I believe the author is trying to show

readers that each and every person has problems no matter how nice their life is. That in my opinion is a main theme in this book. Parkers hectic and pressured life is his downfall. He has major personality issues that he himself cannot fix. He also has bulimia. Bulimia is Parkers weakness and his strength. Its his strength in the way that when he gets upset it helps him to relax and metaphorically puke his stresses out of him. It weakens him by stopping him from asking out the girl of his dreams Julianne. It makes people worry about him and this puts even more pressure on Parker. I find out to Parker pressure equals puking. There's more pressure on parker each day college application date approaches. There's more puking each day college application date approaches. His disease gets so bad and continues to worsen more and more eventually resulting in a climax you will have to read for yourself. One scene sticks in my head. After not asking out Julianne, failing a calculus quiz, and freaking out at his friends for calling him too skinny he says "With. No. Consequences. I had the magical protection of vomiting"(101). This is messed up, but the people in his life don't do anything about it. They think is life is so perfect they never care about his feelings. This is a message people need to know. The author is doing a great thing with this book by trying to show lucky readers that there is more in life to what you do. There is more in life then your appearance. What matters is inside not in this shell that we use to materialize an impression of someone. The books tone and how the text felt like a capturing depressed human view. It was good for me to see it in a view other than my own. It was also interesting even though it doesn't sound so great. His sister Danielle's conscious and chapters say the same thing from the traditional left behind mind of a middle child. Without saying much you know exactly how she feels when she thinks "Parkers getting all the attention at dinner again. Especially because she has an all around successful brother. This was very relatable to me considering I am a middle child and my brother was a straight A student and star track athlete. The quality of this book I thought was great.I must have read it in two or three days. Robin Friedman created a page turner with this one.

Kendell M says

Really puts things into perspective for both characters involved. It gives you a chance to see how quickly things can become out of control.

Katherine (DarlingBibliophile) says

I picked this up at the Thrift Store without even knowing what it was about. Turns out it was a really short story about a male with an Eating Disorder (Bulimia Nervosa to be specific). I've never read a story with a male suffering from an ED, but it happens and I think it should be written about more.

Males suffer from mental illnesses as well. They're less likely to seek help as well, simply because they're kind of ignored in regards to mental health. Having more media addressing males with poor mental help could help end the stigma surrounding them.

Evrin Akman says

This book was amazing. I could not put it down. I can not say in words how much I loved this book. I would also like to say, you can feel how the character and his sister go through the journey. I would recommend this book to everyone!

Jennifer Wardrip says

Reviewed by Marie Robinson for TeensReadToo.com

It is a rare occurrence for me to read a book all the way through in one sitting, yet that is exactly what happened with NOTHING. I could not put it down.

It is the story of a high school senior struggling with bulimia. What makes this story unique is that the bulimic student is a boy. As he struggles with his illness, his younger sister struggles with her own feelings of inadequacy. It's tough for her to be the kid sister of a shining star. Both Parker, age seventeen, and his sister, Danielle, age fourteen, narrate the story, which alternates between their voices. Parker writes in prose, while Danielle expresses herself through free verse. It sounds contrived, but it isn't. The result is a beautiful portrait of the very real pressures that teenagers face. It is a story that is human, touching, and real.

The alternating narrative provides not only perspective to Parker's situation that readers wouldn't see if he were the sole narrator, but it also deftly, carefully, almost imperceptibly shows the effects of Parker's illness on his family. This narrative device also helps provide a window into the causes of his bulimia. Lastly, the free verse in particular adds a sense of beauty and melancholy that helps the reader relate to these two souls in a way that brings them to life and depicts an authentic teenage experience.

Parker and Danielle's parents, Mr. and Mrs. Rabinowitz, are good people. They love their kids. They want what is best for them. They try very hard to be good parents. And they fall into the trap that many parents fall into with their kids - they push too hard in the name of doing what's best. These characters are on the periphery of the story, but they are still real human beings.

Friedman also creates friends for Parker and Danielle who ring true. The girlfriend/boyfriend relationships of the older kids are realistic without being risqué. The reader doesn't get too close to them, but then, neither does Parker. It is an effective way to help the reader feel how isolated Parker and Danielle both feel.

There is a countdown that accompanies each change of narrative. This device shows the passage of time within the story, but also effectively elevates a sense of suspense. As the book begins, the reader is told that Parker's narrative takes place "88 days before." The closer the story gets to that fateful day, the more that Parker and his family fall further apart. His bulimia and anxiety accelerate, Danielle's angst and identity struggle worsens, Mr. Rabinowitz struggles with his own challenging health problems, and Mrs. Rabinowitz struggles to keep it all together. Parker's girlfriend struggles, too, with his ever-increasing emotional distance from her. Yet because the story is so layered with each of these issues, it is impossible to predict just what will happen at the story's climax.

NOTHING grabs you from page one, draws you into the lives of these characters, and does not let go, culminating in a finale that is as satisfying as it is hopeful. It is a beautiful book.

Steven says

That has to be the shortest yet most descriptive title of any of the books I've reviewed to date. I was drawn to this novel because it's out of the ordinary. It tells a, fictional, story about an adolescent boys struggle with bulimia. Although the story is fictional, the facts are not. Males can suffer with eating disorders whether it be bulimi, anorexia or overeating. Robin combined a great amount of real things teens suffer with namely sibling rivalry, college, first love, and of course the eating disorders.

I feel this is a book teens would love to read because it has a great flow. This YA novel reads almost like a journal, flipping between the two main character's: Parker and his sister Danielle. Older readers may look back on their life and find that maybe they wish to go back in time and be more active in their teen years, I know I do! Robin, either purposefully or unknowingly, included education on eating disorders throughout the story. She informs that you don't have to suffer the disorder alone, and that you can get help. The ending was refreshingly uplifting, sad and unexpected all at equal levels. If there was one book I could recommend to teenagers with (eating) disorders it would be "Nothing."

Here are two parts from the novel that stuck with me:

"If you aim at nothing, you'll hit it every time."

"Who are you?

Just because you break hearts
doesn't mean you're a heartbreaker.

Just because you get straight A's
doesn't mean you're a success.

Just because you have a college consultant
doesn't make you college bound.

Just because you fail to act
doesn't make you cowardly.

Just because you need help
doesn't make you weak.

Just because the world sees you as something
or as nothing
doesn't mean anything
at all."

I want to thank Robin once again for being so kind and gracious in sending me a copy of "Nothing." This book came out back in 2008. Reader's just because a book may be a few years old, or even centuries and decades, don't hesitate to give it a shot. Sometimes you will be surprised that a lot of good books are the old ones.

xoxo

Steven

Camila Falcon says

The book: Nothing by Robin Friedman is about a young Jewish man in high school that is stressing about going to HYP (Harvard, Yale, Princeton) he's a very talented, goal driven man with the motivation from his father yet, whenever he undergoes pressure he has to binge food, and then purge the food out. This is called bulimia, and even though mostly females suffer from this, 1 out of 4 people who suffer from bulimia is male. The reason he is bulimic is that he thinks he is overweight. He's very insecure about his weight and whenever someone points out that he is getting skinny, he takes that as he is getting fat. He has a little sister that is almost invisible to the family because she is always behind her brother's shadow and also, their father has breast cancer (also common in females). I liked this book because it educated me about bulimia and gave me a real-life example of how people can suffer from it. This book was very suspenseful and at first it didn't grab me into the book, but as soon as Parker's (the main character) eating disorder started to hurt his relationship, it grabbed me.

Erik Fazekas says

"Sometimes trees can look healthy on the outside, but actually be dying inside. These trees fall unexpectedly during a storm."

Prvá kniha po polro?nom ne?ítaní.

Pre?ítaná za jeden de?, ?istý ?as asi 2 hodiny. Nedokázal som ju pustiť z rúk.

Parker má 17, jednotkár, najžiadanejší chalan, at?... Všetko ?o k tomu na americkej škole patrí... Až na to, že vo svojom vnútri sa rozpadáva. Nedokáže si pomôcť, ale všade vidí iba svoj neúspech. Hlavne by schudol, potom sa všetko napraví. Len aby schudol...

Jeho sestra Danielle má 10 rokov, celý život prežila v tieni úspešného brata, ktorý sa raz stane slávnym doktorom! Potajme túži po tom, aby bola jediná?ik a aspo? tak sa jej dostalo nejakej rodi?ovskej pozornosti.

Ako sa blíži koniec školského roka, tlak na Parkera silnie... a mladý ?lovek je vtedy najvä?šmi zranite?ný.

A práve o tom je táto kniha. O každodennom súboji dospelujúcich, o napl?ovaní rodi?ovských snov a nie svojich vlastných, o premrhaných šanciach, o potrebe nájsť si svoje miesto v spoločnosti.

A keď to najmenej ?akáte, najmladší hlas je zrazu ten najmocnejší... a najvnímavejší!

What am I supposed to do?

Who am I supposed to talk to?

What am I supposed to say?

You call 911 when you hurt yourself.

But who do you call

when your family is hurting?

I want to help.

I just don't know how.

Kniha, ktorá je o poruche stravovania, ale vlastne nie je. Lebo porucha je len dôsledok všetkého, pred ?o je Parker postavený. Porucha nie je stredobodom príbehu ale všetko k nej len smeruje... A to sa mi na tejto knihe pá?ilo. Preto ma oslovila!

Kniha o súrodeneckej láske. O potrebe a túžbe nezištne pomôcť.

Skvelé ?ítanie.

Odporú?am.

Who are you?

*Just because you break hearts
doesn't make you a heartbreaker.*

*Just because you get straight A's
doesn't make you a success.*

*Just because you fail to act
doesn't make you cowardly.*

Just because you need help

*doesn't make you weak.
Just because the world sees you as something
or nothing
doesn't mean anything
at all.*

Vic says

i gave this book five stars not because i liked it, but because the main characters struggles were relatable to me. i found it to be an accurate mindset.

Khepre says

Light Spoilers ahead

This book was a mess. The writing style was weird and didn't feel fitting for a novel dealing with tough subjects like eating disorders. The novel had a piss poor ending. No character growth at all. Very lifetime and Disney in the sense that it was very predictable at times. I will give the author credit for making the boy have an eating disorder instead of the typical teenage girl .

Steph (Reviewer X) says

The only reason I even bothered finishing this is because I have to review it for Book Divas. Had that not been the case, well, I can pretty much guarantee you I'd have stopped reading this after the first ten pages. If I even made it to that.

Let's start with the main character, Parker, who was so groundbreakingly annoying and one dimensional, I couldn't figure out how anyone in their right mind could bear write about him, much less work consistently with him until the book was accepted for publication, and much less have someone else agree to publish a story about him. Here's this supposedly hot, rah-rah high school god who has a self-esteem the size of an ant. I can understand how this might come to be, what with his disgustingly obsessive father, but Parker is so whiny and pathetic throughout the entire book, I couldn't bring myself to care about his nonexistent self-worth. My only question is, how is this weenie so popular? He asks himself the same thing, so I think that's a valid point to raise. Incidentally, he suffers from bulimia, which I guess is supposed to make the reader feel sympathetic toward him and his needy introspections. However, his bulimia is completely unfounded, based on an passing comment his father made about appearances that Parker somehow spun to a personal level. Personally, I thought his entire transformation from repressed-and-stressed high school senior to OMG-obsessed/possessed troubled child was forced and contrived and entirely gratuitous. A plot device, if you will.

Despite his low, low self-esteem and identity crisis, Parker is actively hooking up with girls at parties, most notably with a girl named Julianne, who is, oh sweet god, yet another weenie added to the cast. The story behind them is that in the previous year, when Parker was a junior, he told his friend Spaz that he thought a girl named Amber was really hot. Like the good friend Spaz is, Spaz went ahead and hooked up with Amber, leaving Parker fuming. So Parker goes and starts hooking up with Julianne because she's got the hots for him

and because she's also "incredibly hot". They hook up and they hook up and they hook up some more until Julianne starts getting the hint that she's being used and demands more commitment from him. He dodges her requests because he's "afraid" of something; what the object of his fear is, is never explained, which just adds to the overall exhausting enigma that is Parker's character. Really, he just still had the hots for Amber. Finally, she throws him an ultimatum and, put on the spot, Parker drops the L-bomb on her. That's right, he tells her he loves her. By this time, I was rolling my eyes quite ostentatiously. You won't see me using many acronyms in my reviews, but WTF?

This would be the time to add in here that Julianne's confrontation is the only time in the entire novel she shows any hint of a backbone. In fact, the entire female population inside this novel, with the exception of Danielle, Parker's sister, is thoroughly objectified through Parker's perspective. Need proof? Amber, the forbidden-fruit foxtress, is second-ranked in their class (Parker's first, naturally) and when it's looking like she'll kick him out of first place, Parker honest-to-goodness says, and I quote, "Amber should focus less on being smart and more on being a babe". I won't even comment on this one, so disturbing is it to me.

Moving on: Now we've got relationship Julianne-and-Parker, which means that the once somewhat self-respecting Julianne is reduced to a whiny girl who lingers on to Parker's every word and action. Parker snaps at her? She's "misting her eyes". Parker is being loving and caring and a huggable pooh-bear? She wraps her legs around him and makes out with him in the middle of the halls. Soon she becomes his "only reason for living". Never mind that he's still lusting after Amber and that the only real development in their relationship were a couple of hot 'n' heavy make out sessions. This is clearly a case of true love.

Just when this book couldn't get any more ridiculous, a family member finds out they have cancer. Breast cancer, to be exact. Of course, it couldn't possibly be the mom, as that would be too conventional for this novel's reliance on the inconceivable. No, it's the dad. All of this acts as a catalyst to the deteriorating family, which is what I can only assume a plot twist to add to the sob-fest that is these folks' lives. This obvious plot device was the last straw, the last flush this novel could possibly take before all-out tanking. It read like a cheap shot, a bad joke, and a lame gimmick.

And finally, the ending, which I gather was supposed to give the hope promised in the summary, fell through. It read like a brochure on the consequences of bulimia. No real feeling, no heart, just nothing. (Ironically, that's the name of the novel. Fitting.) Just no.

The only positive thing in this entire book is Danielle, Parker's sister. She's the shadowed-by-older-sibling girl, though I really don't understand why, as she is heaps more interesting than Parker could ever be. Still, the deliverance of Danielle's voice was botched: it was told in free verse for no apparent reason. Even if I had to plow through the eyesore that was presentation of her side of the story, I found her to be a highly respectable and relatable character, which is 10000% more than I could say for any other being present in this novel. I only hope that the remainder of the time she spends in that household before college doesn't taint her.

I'd stay far, far away from this one.

124hannah says

While I really enjoyed this book because it raises awareness about insecurities and health problems in men- I also could have done without it. My reason being that almost all of the characters in this book were annoying. Parker-the main charcter- is, although insecure and going through some real stress and tough times, rather self-centered. I don't want to sound heartless or like I have no concious, but in the book he has a

girl madly in-love and head-over-heels for him... but doesn't have the nerve to do anything but lead her on only to break her heart. Danielle, Parker's sister- is likeable at first but then she just gets weird and clingy. I understand feeling left out because you're the younger sibling-considering I am one- but Danielle takes her jealousy to a different level and the author portrays her in a way that makes her seem obsessed, or in love with her brother. She later finds out about her brother's problem... and does NOTHING about it except for worry and keep it to herself. Let me ask you this, if you knew that a loved-one was doing somethin that is life-threatening, would you keep it to yourself? NO! You love them for crying out loud! SO besides the character portrayal, I thought this book was really well done and I would reccomend it for sure, just be prepared for some annoying characters.

Lyv says

The ending made me angry.

Trina Collins says

Honestly I chose this book to read because I needed a book starting with N for a reading challenge. I did not expect it to be as good as it is or to have as powerful of a lesson to it.
