



Surviving Michael

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On a hot summer's day, after their final school exams, five boys begin a game of dares in which one of them, Michael, will not survive. Fifteen years later, his four friends, Nick, Charlie, Danny and Liam, now in their thirties, have yet to truly come to terms with what happened that day.

Then on the anniversary of Michael's death, they begin the game of dares again. Only this time the dares are bolder, and the consequences more severe. Over one weekend, their game spirals out of control, and forces them, for the first time, to deal with the guilt of surviving Michael.

Surviving Michael is a gritty, poignant, dark but often funny, coming of age story that will stay with you long after you finish the last page.

'Highly recommended!'

'Simply wonderful!'

'Five Stars. Great book! A definite must read'

'Joseph Birchall is snapping at the heels of Roddy Doyle.'

'Surviving Michael is unputdownable'

Surviving Michael Details

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Author : Joseph Birchall

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From Reader Review Surviving Michael for online ebook

Judi says

When first reading this, I had difficulty really getting into the story and characters. But being type A, I felt I needed to finish it. Maybe not being British affected my view or understanding of the culture for teenagers. Surviving what happened to Michael and having the characters developed chapter by chapter was interesting. The concept of "the dare" and how, as adults, they felt driven to complete them, all dangerous and illegal to varying degrees, suggested they were still living in the past. Unexpected ending.

Kimberly Hicks says

This book shows its readers all the things we shouldn't do as children, but the thing is, that's what makes a child a child. Who hasn't made dares with their childhood friends? Little stupid things you think will be funny to see if one of your friends has the balls to actually go through with it. You remember being a kid, right? Well that's exactly what these knucklehead little boys did. Picture standing at the top of a pier or a bridge, if you will, and one of your friends wants someone to jump off the side to see who is the bravest. Of course, when the little boys look over the side, they can easily tell it's quite a drop. Now, it appears that no one wants to try this dare. But there's always this one kid who is the strongest of the bunch that keeps egging his friends to "try it." Isn't it funny how the one that wants you to do something, is never the one to actually try it himself.

So, when there aren't any takers, what do you suppose happens? Oh yeah, a little thing called an "accident." One of the boys is playing around and accidentally pushes Michael off the pier and over the side he goes. As he's falling, screaming and crying out for his life, he sees his friends' faces displaying the look of utter shock and terror as Michael is trying to cling to what little life he has left. He hits the water hard cutting through it like trying to butcher a stubborn bone of chicken. His friends see him go below the surface of the raging water and then resurface again, and as they panic trying to figure out what to do, one of them decides to jump in after him, because it is then realized that Michael cannot swim. Wouldn't you know it, the other three boys talk their friend from jumping and having the same fate. Oh, what fate would that be? Unfortunately, Michael ended up drowning.

These four little boys are terrified and traumatized seeing their little mate die. How in the world do they explain this to Michael's parents. Who is going to assume responsibility over a stupid game of dare? Fast forward to fifteen years later. Those four little boys are now four young men who went on with their lives, each having to live with what happened so long ago. Do any of them talk about what happened to Michael? Of course not! Why on earth dredge up something that was so stupid to begin with. Although they went on with their lives, life wasn't so kind to any of them. And what makes this story even more sad, is that you'd think after having killed their friend, or shall I say, one of them that pushed Michael, while the rest sat by and did absolutely nothing, the same one who proposed a dare to them then, is now proposing an even questionable one.

Yep, you guessed it, this idiot decides to throw more dares out like he's handing out wads of money. What shocked me even more is that these same three friends decide to go along with the mastermind behind Michael's death. The dumb shit these four grown men do is just beyond belief. I was so damn angry that they listened to this friend of theirs, again, and even being adults now, still find the need to dare each other. The ending is somewhat bittersweet. As I read, I kind of figured the story was going to go just as it did, but I couldn't help feeling angry by these men. When do you let go of your childhood past and become the adult

you're supposed to be? What they ended up getting into goes well beyond the scope of what they did to their friend, Michael. It was so obvious these men had learned absolutely nothing, especially after having a second chance at life. When the dust settles and everything is crystal clear, what was left of the lot will quickly diminish and all because of the stupidity on their part.

I found the story slow in many respects, and a bit confusing at times. Each of the boys/men have their own chapters explaining their lives and how they interact with the others. For me, I wasn't always sure who was doing the talking and had to go back a few times to recall the person I was reading. There were times when I felt the story was boring and just showcasing a bunch of men who had not yet grown up. That got really old really fast. And to me, it appeared as though Michael really was an afterthought. The author doesn't really make these characters own up to what they did, which the reader will soon discover as they read the story. So with that, Mello & June gives this novel three stars. These characters were so stupid, immature and downright simple and didn't seem to have a brain among any of them, let alone collectively. They let one friend lead them down a road of despair and for what? It isn't until the very end where one of them actually made some sense, but by this point, there really wasn't any. This isn't a bad read, it just moves a little slow and picks up more as you get closer to the end.

To see full review, please go to <http://mellojune.blogspot.com>

Sarah T says

This book is like a train wreck. I hated it from the first chapter but kept reading. It was like Jumanji with sex, alcohol, theft, and murder.

Jeanne Ulasz says

Interesting

The book poses the question "Does a single act from boyhood forever change and shape the men they will become?"

"Can they overcome this tragedy?"

I like that he also adds in the girlfriend to add another layer to this thought. Whereas "Can she overcome the sins of her mother?"

It's all about growing up and making mistakes and learning the lesson that you have to own up to your mistakes and accept the consequences. And that not a single person lives without making them.

And of course there is the dynamic between these four male friends. You get a great chance to know each one as each new chapter is narrated in a different characters voice. Genius.

Pam F says

Interesting book

Many twists and happenings in this story about dares among friends. This read was not predictable and had a great story line.

Pauline says

First book I have read by this author and it wasn't bad. Storyline was a bit higgledy piggledy and some of the swearing cut out. Will try another by this author.

Dana says

Four teenagers dare each other, and the results are tragic. Fifteen years later, the survivors are trying to come to terms with the tragedy, and do increasingly dangerous acts to remember their friend. It was an okay story, but I had no patience with their stupidity. Each chapter is from the viewpoint of alternating characters. At times, I had difficulty remember who was who, especially near the end when a couple of the new characters had similar names. So, it was an entertaining read, but I wouldn't necessarily recommend it.

Anna Maria says

The story is intense and starts with a boyhood dare. One of five friends died because of it. After many years, the remaining four friends continue the dares out of feelings of guilt, for not having saved Michael. Very good read even if I didn't enjoy this book so much.

Nora Black says

A Class Act with many a toxically tight twist of phrase.

Startlingly fresh, scathingly real and dramatically evocative. A brilliant mind only barely concealed by the words on the pages, words which find a spot deep inside and ache with their truth and glaring insight. Surviving Michael is as dark as it is light, hilarious as it is painful. The book is about stretching the ordinary and the exhilaration (and risk) that whips up on the shirt tails of pushing boundaries. Four friends carry a nasty secret into their future, a future that sees them brood over the darkness it throttles them with every year when they meet to tacitly commemorate the deed. None have hit their mark in life, but their shared guilt has them bound like no other tether. They embark on capturing a sense of their lost innocence by recreating the dares that caused the tragedy of the past.

Be prepared to be thrown into a cauldron of emotions, a cauldron which hurtles through the air at breakneck speed. Bounce off the sides of the unbelievable, but totally hysterical situations each member of the gang is forced to endure, and laugh your head off at the wickedly conjured magic only this nature of crazy can elicit.

This book is not only daringly original, it is written by such a blatantly talented hand that it cannot fail to squeeze the breath, tears and laughter out of you in equal measure... and to wish that the author had another novel you could almost immediately bury your head in.

Stacey says

I didn't care for the story switching back and forth between characters narrating

Reba says

Okay at best

Average book and sometimes difficult to follow. Best part of the book was the final two pages, though it had potential.

Jennifer Entwistle says

Going back and writing a review after the fact, makes me surprised I even gave this book 2 stars. First of all, I really thought I was going to like it from the blurb, but that writer definitely did a great job and I hope the author paid him well because the picture painted of this book and the title, wasn't even close to what was contained here.

First of all, series written in other countries annoy me (just me). I kept having to look terms up in the dictionary and most came up blank. Couldn't follow the vernacular, and there was a lot of it.

Second, these guys didn't give a shit about Michael. They didn't care about anything besides themselves when he died and other than getting together every year (and not talking about him) there's really no mention of him or guilt.

Every character is unlikable in one way or another. The male prostitute. The porn peddler. You feel a little bad for the one with the slight disability but then hey, he goes off and murders an innocent guy on a hunch when his friend was the one who got his girlfriend pregnant after all (saw that one coming). You even may have some likability towards the fat one. He's got a quote in there about eating that really got to me and bothered me. But hey, he peddles porn! They all talk so vulgarly throughout the whole book and do one horrible thing after another. They don't even seem to like each other! Yeah, it's pretty much a train wreck. And the comparison another reviewer gave about it being "Very Bad Things" in a book was pretty accurate. Both this book and that movie left me saying "what the hell was that?"

Vrinda Pendred says

So many times, I nearly stopped reading this. What stayed me was the thought that SURELY it would have a redemptive ending. My hope was kept alive by the number of beautiful turns of phrase strung through the story. But in the end, there was nothing redemptive at all.

Spoiler alert - though I'm not sure what I'm spoiling:

This is a book about a group of boys you hate from the first paragraph because they're like The In-Betweeners without the humour. Honestly, one of them even says he wants to sleep with his first-cousin.

They have a dare night. It results in the only marginally okay boy dying, but you don't really care because you've only had five pages to get to know him. The rest of the book is set fifteen years later when I'm pretty sure none of them was the age they should have been if you did the maths. They're all horrible people. One sells illegal porn. One is a male prostitute. The others are unlikable for somehow being friends with these losers, and even the most acceptable character lost my sympathy for saying the c word. Seriously, every single sentence in this book was full of really violent swearing for no reason. That and sexist language

The only one of them who has a shot at a normal life learns his girlfriend cheated and is now pregnant. He thinks he knows who the father is. He kills him. He learns it was actually the prostitute friend. He kills himself. The friend goes to save him and dies. The others end up in jail for bank robbery. How did ANYONE 'survive' Michael?

It was the most emptying, bleak, pointless, vulgar, disgusting, offensive, depressing, meaningless book - and with 5% left of the book, it randomly switched POV to a brand new character who featured for three pages and was never seen again - and he was just as disgusting. The only thing this book did for me was make me reconsider my interest in visiting Ireland. I hope to God this book isn't representative.

Nikki Henderson says

Misleading title and too many F-bombs

Maybe I inferred incorrectly, but I was expecting a different kind of story. I thought it would have more to do with the death of their childhood friend, but it had little to do with book except that it supposedly screwed up all of them in one way or another. The story didn't really pick up until the end, and throughout the book, especially at the beginning, I had trouble keeping all the characters and their backstories sorted. The Irish dialect could be hard to keep up with at times, and I hated all the F-bombs throughout the book.

Bryan D. says

62 of 75 for 2015. As the cover states, "Five boys begin a game of dares. Only four will survive." Put yourself in the place of those four survivors. What if one of your childhood friends died doing something you dared him to do? What if you are the one who pushed him into the situation that robbed him of life? How would you survive the guilt? Most of Birchall's novel takes place fifteen years after Michael was pushed off the pier into the icy cold water that claimed his life. Fifteen years later, the four "survivors" are still friends, still get together on a regular basis, especially on each anniversary of Michael's death, but all are trapped in a kind of stasis of their own, none of them truly achieving any kind of successful adulthood. What if, Nick wonders, they were to continue the dare game that started and ended with Michael's death? Would that break them out of their individual impasses? As I read Birchall's story set in Dublin, I became more and more involved in the lives of these four men, moving from indifference to full engagement as their situations became ever more dire. If I found the beginning a bit slow, by the end I was deeply drawn to see how Nick, Charlie, Danny and Liam would handle themselves. Highly recommended.
