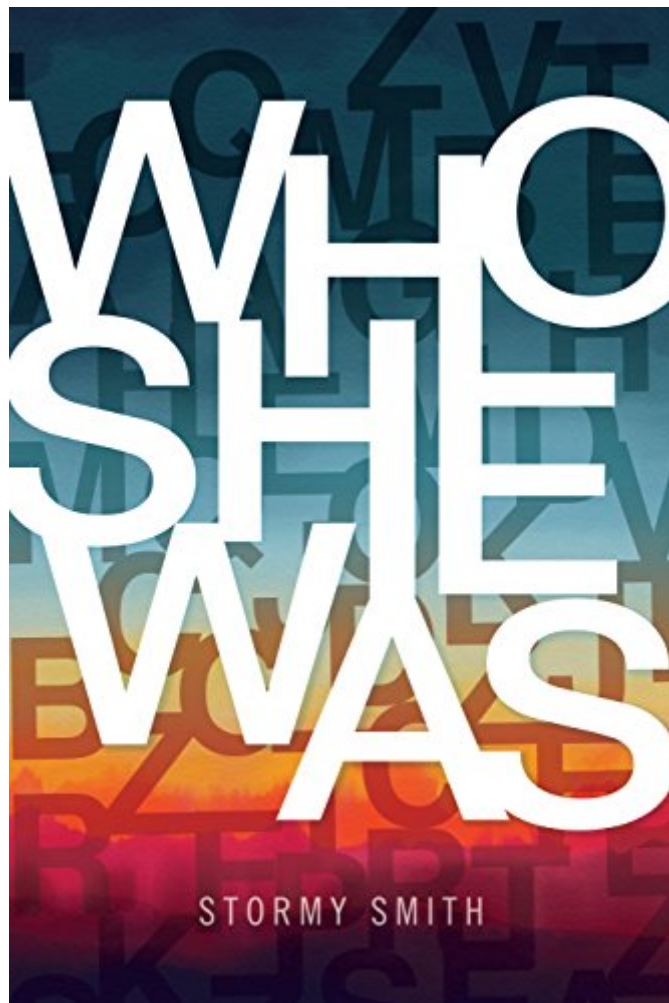


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Who She Was



Synopsis

Childhood friends reunited. One twisted by tragedy. The other living a lie. Trevor Adler just saved his former best friend from a disastrous dating auction, but he has an agenda: to find out why she cut off contact four years ago and if the girl he used to know is still buried beneath her too perfect facade. Charlotte Logan is hiding from the truth and knows Trevor is the only person who can uncover it. He's the last person she needs and the only one she wants. But Trevor has secrets of his own and when the police come calling, he must finally decide whose life he's living. Fate brought them back together, but Trevor and Charlie must decide if saving each other matters more than saving themselves.

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Customer Reviews

4 stars -- I received a free advanced copy from the author in exchange for an honest and unbiased review/opinion. There is SO much to love about this story, but the highlight for me is most certainly the characters. They were so full of depth, quirky, EXTREMELY lovable, but also with epic flaws that made them feel real (and made you occasionally not like the things they were doing, even as

you still loved them). And since characters are a highlight for me, this played a huge part in why I enjoyed this book. Trevor was seriously swoony. He pursued his friendship with Charlie with a single-minded determination that had you cheering for him...most of the time. It was interesting to see a character that put so much thought and care into another human being, but at the expense of himself and sometimes without realizing that a true friendship has the give and take, and to expect someone to let you in, you also have to let them in. So occasionally I would want to smack him into learning that lesson faster...but again, that's where that depth of character and flaws part comes in. He had his own growing and learning to do (and not just because of what was happening in his own life, and the struggles he was dealing with). But he was honestly so sweet and understanding with Charlie, and I loved the way he knew when to push her and when to back off. And he seriously had some of the swooniest lines I've ever heard, I was melting right along with Charlie (and Darcy). Charlie was strangely easy to love as well. Strange because we don't get to hear her thoughts much in the first half, and the way she behaved could be very offputting. But maybe it's because you get such a strong hint that something awful has happened to hurt her and force her to put on that mask. And I will admit that I had a strong hint (and I'm not sure why, maybe it was from the first chapter, or I saw something that spoiled it?), of what might have happened. So I was waiting to see inside her mind. I loved the growth her character went through, and the conclusions that she comes to about what she needs. And the chemistry between Charlie and Trev was pretty fantastic...especially friendship wise. They had this amazing flow between them, a banter and a way of interacting that just made me want to know them in real life. And some of the swoony moments between them gave me such freaking butterflies. I will admit to being a little bummed we didn't get more romance. I'm a romance lover, and after some of that build up, I really wanted the payoff to be bigger. Speaking of characters, Sam and Darcy were the sh*t. Seriously. Some of the best secondary characters I've seen in a while, I loved the way they were there in the background, offering support, and going through their own struggles. They were SO fun and offered some of the best advice. I adored them. In the end this book delved into some pretty hard topics, but I felt like it did so with realism and heart. My heart broke for both characters and the struggles both in their past and present. I really thought that their personal developments moved at a real pace. It wasn't something that could be changed overnight, but that took time and a lot of steps. Sometimes I feel like other books rush this, and so it was really refreshing. So why not 5? Some little reasons, and a bigger one that has me a bit baffled. I can't put my finger on why, but I kept avoiding reading this book, even while reading it. I would find other things to do. I even got snagged by another book in the middle. Was it that I was avoiding the tough topics? Maybe. But I think I might have been a bit

bored on occasion, I needed just...something more. Or maybe that there was just SO much that Ms. Smith tried to pack into this one novel, and I felt like one or two things then got shortchanged. In particular I felt like I needed more of a connection with the music. It was supposed to play this large role, but often times I would find it got forgotten and then just brought up here and there. It's hard to explain. I really enjoyed the lyrics that they wrote to one another nearer to the beginning, I thought those were beautiful. I was a little confused on some of the later ones, but I'm kind of dense when it comes to lyrics, so that was probably just me. I felt a bit let down with the ending too. The developments with Charlie's family COMPLETELY threw me, and I couldn't really reconcile the changes. It's not that I didn't expect some development and change, but what we got felt too neat and tidy and unrealistic (at least for me). It sort of felt that way for a few things, like we had this real and gritty book, and then the ending fell flat (the grand gesture left me confused) and a bit rushed. I might have just been tired though. So there's my novella of a review. There were just so many things that I loved about this book, but I just can't shake that other feeling. I hate when I can't articulate (even in my own head) what I'm feeling. I sincerely hope it's just a me thing, b/c this book has so much power and love to share.

Who She Was is a great book that tackles some hard subjects and does so in a way that gives them the attention they deserve. It's about two college kids who used to know each other and be the best of friends before life tore them apart. Their stories were both so difficult, the things their parents forced upon them and the reasons why something no child should ever have to deal with. When Trevor found Charlie at the beginning of the school year, he made it his goal to get back into her life. Charlie pushed him away because she held a secret that she couldn't bare sharing with anyone, and that meant not getting close to anyone at all. I loved their back and forth, the snarky responses followed by their jokes and winks. They were a lot of fun, and it kept the story interesting while we waited for them both to be able to share the truth of their lives. Darcy and Sam were great supporting characters, and I loved that they had depth and their own issues to deal with as well. One of my favorite things about this book was seeing mention of all things Des Moines. It's not often something happens in this small city, but Ms. Smith brought just as much attention to the city as she did the subject matter and the music that was woven throughout the entire book. The Nomade and the restaurants, the Riverwalk and all the bars. It makes me want to go downtown and visit all of the locations myself. I really enjoyed this book, as I have all of this author's books, and I look forward to reading more.

I am absolutely in awe over this book. It isn't a story where you watch the characters and follow to their preordained destination. No, this is something entirely different. This is more than a plot-line, it is an experience. Trevor and Charlie struggle to reconcile their pasts with their future, in addition to finding their identity in the midst of it all. Between the two, they face very real mental health issues that are prevalent in young adults today. Many of these topics are ones that are quietly pushed to the side or forgotten, like sibling suicide and grief, abuse, addiction, and establishing a true sense of self by processing the struggle (a path which many choose to ignore). They embody the true meaning of friendship, supporting one another during the storm without hindering self growth. Stormy's writing incredibly captures the depth of the struggle and takes the readers into the story where they will feel every heart wrenching choice, and each mangled piece of identity until the very end. Personally, working in the mental health field, I have seen much of what is addressed in this book and it does not get anymore real than this. If you are looking for a book that is real, emotionally charged, and depicts the struggles of life, then this is for you. It is powerful, beautiful, and will leave you with a sense of understanding just a little more about this crazy thing we call life.

Sadly, I could not get invested in these characters. Love this author's other works but this one just wasn't for me. The whole American college frat thing feels alien to me and I think that without having experienced it perhaps a lot of the mood is lost for the reader. While we all see it in American movies it just seems so puerile and fake that it is hard for people from other countries to see it as real and I found too much of this book to feel like part of the movie American Pie even though the underlying "message" was way more serious. Given that I read a lot of different types of books and I don't feel this way say having read a Steampunk book set in 1800's England I can only assume it is in the execution of the writing rather than the setting which has put me off. Can't really recommend this one as the writing style is really pre to early teen but the underlying message is more adult. If you like the author's other books perhaps read a sample before outright purchasing this one.

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