



Long Story Short

Siobhán Parkinson

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From Ireland's first laureate for children's literature comes a story of abuse and neglect told with sincerity, heart, and a healthy dose of humor.

Jono has always been able to cope with his mother's drinking, but when she hits his little sister Julie, he decides it's time for them to run away. Told in Jono's funny, self-conscious voice, the layers of his past and the events of his escape are gradually revealed. Amusing and touching but never sentimental, Siobhan Parkinson is a well reviewed middle-grade author who now turns her considerable skill as a writer to a young adult audience.

Long Story Short Details

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Author : Siobhán Parkinson

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From Reader Review Long Story Short for online ebook

Jools says

A good quick read that will grab some younger teens, probably for 12 to 15 years. A teenager 'rescues' his 8 year old sister from their downward spiraling alcoholic mother. Their grandmother was the glue that kept them going, but now she has died it is really clear that their mother is not capable of looking after them. And now she has become violent. Terrified that social services will separate them, Jonathan decides the only answer is to run away.

Kellee says

Reviewed at:

<http://www.teachmentortexts.com/2011/...>

Summary: Jonathan (Jono) and Julie's mother might as well be nonexistent. She sleeps through the day, goes out to drink at night and then comes home to pass out. Jono is in charge of Julie since he is 8 years her senior. It isn't too bad, except when their mom forgets to get their government check for food or if she spends it all on booze. But then their mother goes one step too far- she hits Julie. Jono cannot take the thought of being separated from Julie because of their mother, so the two of them run away to make it together.

What I Think: This is one of those books that when you are done you have to go just sit somewhere and breath. It is too real. By the end you are so attached to the characters that leaving them feels like part of you is being put away with the book. It is so emotionally draining. It is a story of finding hope when there is none. When all choices are poor choices, but you still have to make one.

Siobhan Parkinson is the Children's Literature Laureate of Ireland and she has received this honor for a reason- the writing of this book is phenomenal. The authenticity of her voice resonates throughout the book. Jono is sarcastic, funny, dramatic... real.

I think that this book has just enough drama and realism in it to hook a reader. Often I find that some really well written books just do not have the kid appeal that you'd hope. This book is different because most students can connect with (or find interesting/horrifying) what is going on with Jono and Julie. However, I could foresee a problem with some of the Irish slang in the book. Although the book is universal, Jono is Irish and as any 16 year old boy would, he uses slang just not American slang. I could see how a struggling reader would find this a difficulty.

Rock says

I loved this and Heart Shaped. I read them awhile ago but it was nice to see the different views in two books. Thanks c:

Jess says

A bleak story and an unreliable narrator. It's hard going into a story knowing the narrator is unreliable, because you're constantly on the lookout for signs of deception. I picked this up after reading reviews, partly because the characters go to Galway and partly to see if it felt more tween or teen (answer: teen). I'd recommend this to teens who like books that feel a bit unsettled and gritty.

BooksAndRae says

This was a very enjoyable book to read. Its well written and is based on a boy who would do anything to protect his younger sister after the incidents that happened during their family lives

Angelina Justice says

This is a great read for any audience, but is presented, successfully, from a male perspective. The plot is not new, and is based on a far too frequent reality. This is a good piece of realistic fiction that looks at the chain of events that culminates in two children running away from the neglect and abuse that has reached a crisis point.

The older child, a fourteen year old boy, is telling us the story in bursts and fits. The narration becomes a little too fragmented sometimes, but not so much that it detracts from the story. If anything, it adds to the realistic tone of the telling.

Despite it's painful topic, the book ends on a note of hope and with the narrator's "growth", emotionally and mentally speaking.

The underlying theme of fierce love between two siblings when the adults in their lives have let them down is intriguing and rare in juvenile literature.

Margaret Madden says

Review to follow...

Betty says

This was well written and an engaging read. It tells the story of a young boy and his sister. They leave their perpetually drunk mother in an effort to escape being abused, only to find living on the streets and trying to make your own way is more difficult than they imagined. Although written for younger readers, this has an element of realism which would be difficult for some to cope with. It portrays the love a boy has for his younger sister and the lengths he goes to to look after his mother and sister before he takes the decision to leave.

Suzanne says

It's not a bad story, and true, it is nice and short--often a big selling point with teen readers; but it's just way too Irish, too foreign, for the average American reluctant reader.

People that can get past all the chip shops, dole checks, garda, steak and kidney pies, and bejaysus may enjoy the devotion Jonathan feels for his 8-year-old sister Julie and be suitably horrified when their drunk of a mother strikes Julie when she complains about only apples for dinner and marks her so completely that Jono has to lie about why he and Julie are missing days of school. Ultimately, he runs with Julie from Dublin to Galway, enduring privation and homelessness before dropping Julie at the doorstep of the father that has completely moved on with a new family. When Jono gets into a few scrapes living off the grid, we learn he's telling his story to the police and a social worker and that things got a lot worse before there's any chance he can move toward the better.

Nice characterization and a mild dose of schadenfreude make this a good choice for the YA readers cosmopolitan enough to go with the Irish diction and environment and still enjoy personal distance from Jono's troubles and his eventual progress toward overcoming them.

Elsa says

Very good story of a 14 year old boy who has to be the adult in his dysfunctional family. His mom is a falling down drunk, dad's gone and his gramma has recently died so he is the only one who cares for his little sister. His mom hits the girl one day in a drunken rage so he takes her and they run away from home. It is nice to read a story like this though, where, while the system has failed these kids, they do end up with caring people who can help them.

Jane says

The strength of 14-year-old Jono's voice is what sells this story. From the beginning, his awareness of the uses and malleability of narrative forms hints that he might be an unreliable narrator. We never lose sight of the fact that we are grounded in Jono's interpretation of events, a position that creates an intense empathy for him. The story does falter slightly in Part II, when his omission of several events becomes clear. The presence of a gap in the timeline could have been made explicit to the reader earlier on; I actually went back to the initial telling of the events to see if I'd missed something. Even so, this is a powerful story. I cried (a rare thing for me) at the unfairness of Jono's situation and the depths of his hopelessness and desperation to hang on to his sister. The emotional life of the protagonist is finely and truthfully constructed. He may be fictional, but I wish only the best for this kid!

I also think the themes and events are universal enough to overcome any confusion an American audience might encounter with the Irish slang.

Sheryl says

I am so confused after reading this. 14 year old Jonathan is on the run with his eight year old sister after their mom hits Julie. Next thing you know he is accused of murdering his mother and has robbed a store. This seemed to come out of nowhere and was not resolved by the end of the book. The plot was very disjointed and I am disappointed as I truly thought I would enjoy this book based on the description.

Kiona Zomers says

Long story short is about a boy (Jonathan) whose mom who gets drunk all the time, and one day the mom hits the little sister (Julie). Now they want to run away. I really didn't like this book. I normally like books like this, but it was really confusing. The book jumps back and forth, like one chapter it will be in the present then the next chapter will be one of Jonathan's memories. I really don't like books that do that. I actually only like books that are always in the present, but if you don't mind books that go from present to past this would be a good book for you. Besides it going back and forth it really wasn't that bad I guess. I mean the book wasn't what I thought it was going to be it needed a lot more detail. It also needed more events, and it needs a bigger climax there wasn't like a big shocking climax. Also the grammar is really bad. I wouldn't really recommend this book to anyone.

Anne says

Jono struggles to take care of his little sister, Julie, and his alcoholic mom. Although he's still a kid himself, he does a pretty good job of keeping things going at home and covering up for the lack of an adult in his life. But when his mom finally goes too far and hits Julie Jono knows he's got to do something. Initially he dismisses Julie's idea to run away but finally decides that it's their only option.

Things quickly go downhill and Jono finds himself in police custody. What's the deal? Has he been telling us the whole story?

I really enjoyed this short book. Parkinson does a great job of revealing an abusive family situation without resorting to graphic depictions of violence. Jono is a terrific, if somewhat unreliable, narrator and his self-effacing style is endearing. He is a great kid who is desperately searching for some normalcy in a very abnormal world.

??♥ says

Well, I had to give it a 2, instead of a 1, because although I want to dislike it, it was ok.

Jono has always been able to cope with his mother's drinking, but when she hits his little sister Julie, he decides it's time for them to run away. (Haha, direct from GR).

And along the way he gets accused of murder and what-not. Sad when people don't believe in the truth :(

I liked Jono's character a lot, and also the style of writing (very personal with the character) but something about the story made me dislike it. Can't think what...

Maybe the fragmented telling of the story? Ok, people say it adds to the story, makes it more realistic, but I find it a bit nonsensical. You can still tell what it's about, but in a messy way...?

So, it was an ok book, and I guess it would appeal to some people more than others (as with most books...) but for me, I can't say it was amazing.
