



More Than a Number

Tia Souders

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For seventeen-year-old Grace Michaels, "average" is the worst word she can hear.

Part of the in-crowd at Providence High, she is steps away from being asked out by the most desired guy at school, winning a prom queen nomination, and her parents' approval. If she can just get skinny enough, be pretty enough, and popular enough.

All she has to do is eat less than the week before. Lose just one more pound. But soon, she finds herself in a deadly game of self-acceptance. Is love enough to pull her back from the edge?

Fans of emotional contemporary YA will fall in love with Souders' heart-wrenching novel. Like Jay Asher's *Thirteen Reasons Why* and Lauren Oliver's *Before I Fall*, *More Than a Number* raises thought-provoking questions about love and acceptance, as well as the cost of beauty.

*Previously titled *Something of Substance**

More Than a Number Details

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Author : Tia Souders

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From Reader Review More Than a Number for online ebook

Jessica Bronder says

Last year Grace was the chunky girl but after spending the summer at a fat camp she has slimmed down and become part of the "in" crowd at school. But she just isn't enough. Pretty enough, thin enough, perfect enough, etc. So she starts obsessing with weight loss. She has convinced herself that if she loses just a little more weight that she can be the hot guys girl, the perfect daughter, even happy.

This story is about a teenager that is suffering from anorexia. Grace constantly focuses of food, calories, and trying to lose weight. Her body image has become warped and she doesn't see herself and those around her as she falls deeper and deeper into herself. Yes, this story repeats itself. She constantly keeps telling herself the same thing over and over and this does get to be annoying. But when you are suffering from some issue you make everything about this thing. You start believing what the dark voices in your head tell you and can't seem to break out of this rut no matter what you do.

This is a touching, heartbreaking story. I felt for Grace and it broke my heart that she didn't see those around her that loved her through the haze that she focused on. It's a sad message but one that needs to get out. With body image issues it's a great story to show how destructive these thoughts and behaviors really are.

This might not be the book for everyone, especially since I have seen others write along the same line. But it is a sad but honest look at this disease.

I received a complimentary copy of this book. I voluntarily chose to read and post an honest review.

Stacy says

I was really torn about this book-- first off, because I think in a sense, it accurately portrays how much an overwhelming, all-consuming obsession an eating disorder can become. I have read that those afflicted with this feel very out-of-control in their lives, and begin to major on the minor-- i.e. what does and doesn't go into their mouths, because that they can control. I have heard tales of measuring food in preparation (each dice having to be an exact size), and extreme anxiety over any extra calorie accidentally consumed (eating at a friend's, and getting caught up in conversation and losing track of how much was actually eaten, etc.)...and this book showed how it can take over one's life. Extreme calorie counting (allowing themselves only a few hundred a day or less) , obsessive workouts, and serious self- image issues (where no matter how thin they become, they still see the heavy person in the mirror), to the point every thing else in life becomes trivial -- relationships, life goals and dreams-- the only thing matters is "getting thin enough" to erase the "fat" person in their head-- which never happens. For this reason, I didn't give it a lower rating.

But, I felt the main character in this book, saw the other people in her life as serving a purpose to help her achieve the status she had always longed for-- popularity, included with the "in"crowd, and prom queen, and getting the date with the most popular guy in school. She seemed to be a bit of an over-indulged brat that was willing to sacrifice all the people she cared about in order to achieve her self-absorbed goals.

The end did have an emotional ending, but her recovery seemed to be barely touched on (not the long painful process it would be in reality)-- only given a couple of sentences in passing, and for these reasons I didn't give it a higher rating.

I received this book in exchange for an honest review-- thank you.

Carla says

This was an extremely powerful and touching book for me. I remember still to this day how difficult high school was and how I struggled with body image and eating disorders. I remember skipping meals and the sense of control it gave me as other areas of my life were spiraling out of my control. I remember how as a teenager, your body and its size were discussed every day - look at her hips, her bum and how big her arms are and so on. Looking back, I can see where my unhealthy relationship with food and body image began and I am sure so can many young women and adults.

This book focuses on Grace who once was just slightly overweight but as many women can attest to, this is unacceptable by society. She does everything and anything she can to lose the weight which even involves going to "fat camp" (how I detest that name!). When she finally loses the weight, she becomes part of the in crowd and has the attention she's always wanted from her peers but not from her family. Like so many of us have realized, when we achieve that goal it can sometimes not be enough, for example - I have lost forty pounds so therefore I can lose another ten.

Grace's life becomes out of control (her relationship with her parents, her sister and her social life) and the only way she can control any aspect of it is through starving herself. As she begins to starve herself more and more, she could only hide her behaviour for so long before a terrible accident sheds light on the severity of her mental and physical health and her relationships with her family members and friends. It is then that everyone must face the truth about the impact their verbal and nonverbal actions had on Grace and her mental and physical health.

This is a very powerful novel that is a must read for all young girls and even adults. It hits on so many emotions and perceptions that we deal with on a daily basis. It is raw and honest with how Grace feels and how she reacts in the only way she knows how to. It addresses feelings of failure, social acceptance and social hierarchy in school, relationships and communication. As women, many of us may find parts of our younger selves in Grace and I am sure many young adults will see aspects of their day-to-day in how Grace feels and reacts. It brings an extremely important topic that many would like to ignore into the forefront. I can honestly say that this is a book that I wish I had been able to read in my teens to help save myself from years of poor self image and unhealthy relationship with food.

Suzie Waltner says

First, a bit of warning, reviewing this book without spoilers is next to impossible, but I'm going to try my best.

Throughout the story, I couldn't decide if I disliked Grace or felt sorry for her. She is so wrapped up in her goal of becoming popular (and getting a certain prom date) that she's pretty much oblivious to everything else around her, with the exception of how much more attention her parents pay to her sister than her. In the end, I felt sorry for Grace, but it was almost too late in the story.

You'll figure out fairly early who the important people in Grace's life are (especially the real hero of this story). Despite Grace's insistence on getting that prom date, this guy is persistent and consistent. He cares

about Grace and has always seen beyond her appearance.

The subject of this book is serious and the author brought that to light with long periods of Grace intently focused on her calorie count, setting her goals, looking at herself in the mirror almost to the point where it became easy to skip over it. I would have preferred a little more of Grace's family dynamic in place of one or two of these scenes. I mean, Grace and her twin sister hardly talk to each other—not even to argue. They pretty much exist in two different worlds unless their parents force them together.

Souders doesn't shy away from the damage Grace does to her body as she restricts her calorie count and loses more weight than healthy. The self-image issues are handled well. But does no one really notice, other than comments here and there, until Grace weighs under a hundred pounds? Her best friend comments and discovers her secret (very near the end of the book) but doesn't take any action?

Disclosure statement:

I receive complimentary books from publishers, publicists, and/or authors, including NetGalley. I am not required to write positive reviews. The opinions I have expressed are my own. I am disclosing this in accordance with the Federal Trade Commission's 16 CFR, Part 255.

Leslie aka StoreyBook Reviews says

This book takes a deep look into body image and how it affects people today, especially women. The dangers of anorexia are real but it isn't worth your life.

Grace is a character that you will probably love and hate at the same time. While she was once "fat" (approximately 40 lbs by the text), she decided that she did not want to be overweight so she attends a "fat" camp and works at reinventing herself. However, it spins out of control as she obsesses with her weight, how many calories she is eating, and being a part of the popular crowd. She becomes the person that we all remember from high school - not quite a bully, but not nice either. I think she feels bad about how her "friends" treat those that are overweight as she was once that girl.

Grace's family is dysfunctional too but you don't find out some of the real reasons why until the end when her issue is discovered by her family. I do think her parents set her up to be this way because she was not a star athlete like her sister Kelly. We really don't know a whole lot about Kelly's life and perhaps a story from her perspective during the same time period could be interesting to see how she deals with her sister's anorexia. We do have a little peek into her life, but not enough to really get to know her well.

Then there is her best friend Cara. I think Cara knows something is going on but perhaps is too afraid to confront Grace or even tell a parent so that this could have been addressed sooner and before it became almost fatal. But at the same time, it is hard when you are younger to betray your friend even if it is in their best interest.

Of course since this is high school there are boys. I am definitely Team Jake all the way. Yes, he is Cara's younger brother (by about a year) but he had grown up and filled out and knows Grace perhaps better than she knows herself. Luca is a bit of a wild card and many times I wondered what the real story was with his interest in Grace. Was it real? Was it part of a bet or something stupid that boys sometimes participate in with each other? As that story unfolded I knew that it wasn't going to end well.

This was a book that I loved and hated. Remember how I said you would love and hate Grace at the same

time? I loved that this character was bringing to life an issue that we see all too often - body image and what is acceptable or not acceptable according to society and the media. At the same time, I did not like how obsessed she was with losing weight and wanting Luca. She was self absorbed through much of the book, but then when interacting with her family I felt sorry for Grace because she wasn't receiving attention from her parents and the focus was on her sister.

I think a great addition to the end (or in the author notes) would be signs to look for and who to tell if you suspect someone you know is going through the same situation.

books are love says

Received in exchange for a honest review.

there are very few books that I say need to be read by a particular group. I can count on one hand those books. Perks of being a wallflower and 13 reasons why are the two i have said need to be read when in high school. the books that show us insecurities we have in school and the consequences of our actions like those two. And until Something of Substance I didn't think I would say this book is one all high school students should read again after those two but with Something of Substance I think that it is especially true.

Tia Souders has written a very compelling, haunting emotionally gut wrenching but very real tale of one girl's struggles. She has written such a realistic look at our body image in high school, how we thrive to be popular and once there what we do to stay there, how we perceive ourselves and sometimes have self hate and doubt. How we obsess over how we are seen, who we should be seen with and how we act. How we lose ourselves in the self absorption of wanting to belong at all costs and forget who we truly are. How that desire to fit in is overwhelming but also our weight and how it can take over our lives. Why? Because it is how it is in high school. We strive to belong and fit in. Strive to be rail thin and like everyone else. Only sometimes in our strive for this elusive perfection we lose ourselves along the way. and Tia souders has put this on raw display in this amazingly written accurate portrayal of one girl's struggle with this and more. Her struggle with feeling like a failure and less than what she is. At feeling like she is invisible and no one thinks she matters. How the only control she has is in her weight lose and this is what she grabs onto and has take over her life. It is how her spiralling world is put in control. The story is sad, uplifting, realistic and emotional. There isn't one feeling or thought that Grace has you can't relate to at one time. We all struggled as she is and Tia souders has done excellent in portraying them and showing the reader what is going on. We see how body image is distorted when we have such a low self image and how all we see is what we want and not what is. How we even when we think are in control are not and our disease takes over. That is what we see with Grace her eating disorder takes over and her desire to be perfect and fit in is so alive it takes over even when she doesn't want it to.

the book is seen through Grace's eyes and it is haunting. Also so very very accurately portrayed of all most of us go through in school it brings you back to that awkward time. We see what someone with a eating disorder goes through as well and all they do to hide their issue. How much self loathing they have and how out of control they feel with their life. We see those that love them feel helpless and not know what to do. Watching in the glass house as things shatter and crumble and watch them pray that the one person who is in trouble can come back to them.

So that is this haunting, realistic, emotional and beautiful book. A story of Grace and how she struggles to become who she is only to have her world be spiralling out of control due to her struggles. How those around

her see it and how the one boy who loves her is there and supports her even when she doesn't like herself much. How that one boy gives her the anchor she needs to fight and come out ahead. How a family finds their way to seeing the bigger picture and knowing that they are in for a fight to keep the one they love and have her come back to them. the story is of struggle and how we see ourselves and how it distorts reality and takes over until it is too late and we can't control the consequences until it may be too late. And the fight to come back as well. Tia souders has written a book all students should read and see just what can happen and that it is real. Parents should read this so they can see what kids think and struggle with in high school and how they need to know there is understanding and love. A book that grips you from the beginning and doesn't let go to the end. So realistic and emotional you can't put it down and just hope for the best with Grace and you go through her journey to finding herself and see her struggle and whether or not she can come out stronger than ever. a very powerful portrayal of one girl's struggle with her own self image and worth and how she deals with it - one that is emotionally gripping and so very realistic and a must read

Valerie (Howler_Puff) says

More Than A Number It's another take on a high-school student suffering from an eating disorder. Grace ended up going to fat camp one summer to lose 40 lbs. Losing the weight made her able to reinvent herself when she went back to school her Jr year. No one seemed to recognize her and she suddenly found herself as one of the "elite". She then begins to really study her body and see how much more work she needs to do to become "perfect". That's when the eating disorder starts. This wasn't a great book, but it wasn't horrible. I wish the epilogue would have offered more than what it did. I wanted to know about her current weight, her mental state, things like that. I didn't get that.

Anastasia ? says

Hmmm.. I don't know what to say.... First off, I didn't really finish this book, I took me about a month to read 15% of it... and I struggled to read up to 80% of it.... I struggled reading Grace's story, even shed a tear here and there.

Anyways, Full Review on my blog!

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Jacqueline Norman says

Received a copy for free in exchange for an honest review.

Unfortunately, the honest review is that I could not finish the book. I really wanted to like it. The cover looked interesting and I have read many books similar to this, with a similar premise. This, however, was the problem. While reading this book, I honestly questioned whether I had read this before. The plot (from the 25% I was able to get through) felt re-hashed. It read like a real teenager had written this... unfortunately this is not a positive note. I felt like I was listening to a 14-year-old girl complain about her life.

I did not give the story one star because I did not finish it, but I think it is still worth a review, just because it

is such a familiar and repetitive story. Two stars because I really did want to enjoy this book. It drew me in as these stories can, but was unable to hold me there. Regretfully, I felt the story itself had no originality and lacked substance.

PinkAmy loves books, cats and naps says

My one star rating is because MORE THAN A NUMBER sends a terrible message to teens.

Boundaries are so important in relationships. No ought to mean NO. Period. The end. No more discussion. Instead Jake, the boy next door, continually pursues Grace, despite her expressed interest in another guy. Turns out the popular boy is a jerk and she should have been with Jake all along. No matter that he virtually stalked her and didn't listen to Grace's boundaries, Jake was right all along.

Girls need to understand that not accepting No isn't sweet or romantic, it's controlling behavior which often accompanies domestic violence. Boys need to learn that No means no, even if they *think* the object of their affections is playing hard to get (don't do this girls) or they they no better than their prospective dates.

The one star is also for bad writing and plot.

Myliisa Demeyere says

This book follows the story of Grace, a seventeen-year-old high schooler that was heavier last year, but after a summer 'fat'-camp is now finally at her goal weight, and part of the in-crowd at school.

Convinced that she needs to up her game to be more popular, catch the eye of the hot guy in school, and finally get the attention she so craves from her parents, she decides losing more weight is the way to go. The more she loses, the more in control she feels. Sadly, she loses sight of how out of control everything around her is falling.

I must admit that the first couple of chapters I had to push myself to continue. So much was focused on the food and calorie count, almost a droning on of her inner dialogue.

Once I got past that, I got lost in the inner working of her twisted mind, and I could so see how Grace was going through what she was going through. I as a woman, and once a teenage girl, understand the struggle we as females today face to look good, fit in. It seems like at some point or another (maybe for some even a constant) we battle the image we feel we need to achieve to be the best version of ourselves.

This book takes you along on the journey of an anorexic girl, who ultimately believes that starving herself will solve all of the issues in her life. That voice that we all hear sometimes telling us we aren't good enough, pretty enough, skinny enough, that voice got the upper hand here. And it is painful yet unstoppable to read it. I struggled reading Grace's story, even shedding a tear somewhere in there, but I felt compelled to power on and see where this book would take me.

On the romance side of this book, very early on in I figured out who the real hero and love interest would be. And he is AMAZING! It just comes to show how important it is to love someone that is your closest friend.

What for me was a little down side to the book, was Grace's recovery. Having gone on the whole journey with all the characters I felt like when we finally faced the moment of Grace being pieced together again, it could have been more than a lengthy epilogue. But that is just my opinion.

In all, this book was very thought provoking, and left me with a mayor book funk after finishing the last page. I'll be sure to look out for more by Miss Souders.

Lenni Jones says

OH. MY. GOODNESS. THIS BOOK WAS SO FREAKING AWESOME!!!!!!!!!!!!!! I didn't know if I should expect romance or not...but there was romance. And let me tell you, IT WAS AWESOME. I'm so in love with Jake!!!!!! I WANT JAKE!!!!!! He's so admirable and he has all the traits a girl could possibly want in a guy. After all those years of her rejecting him, he STILL was loyal to Grace. Or should I say "Gracie"?????♥♥♥♥♥♥ I made a lot of notes while reading this book, and "I love Jake" made up a huge portion of them.

Besides romance, there was also the issue of anorexia. It brought awareness to me. I knew that anorexia was a problem. But this, this really brought light to my eyes. Those side effects of anorexia are SUPER scary! This book will definitely be impacting more of my life decisions. I'm no longer going to tell myself I'm fat, because if you saw me, you'd know I'm not. Trust me, this book is a must read for girls who think they're fat.

So, what did I think of this book over all? It was SO romantic and SO enlightening. I'm so happy the author asked me to be a part of her review team for this book!!! This is a total must read for teen girls who feel pressured to be skinny and popular.

Also, I LOVE JAKE!!!!!!

Brandy says

Something of Substance by Tia Souders

I TRY to avoid spoilers (very hard to do with this book while giving it a full review.) That said, if you have triggers with any of the below mentioned, read with caution.

There are: body image issues -from mentally calculating uneaten food, written accounts of all ingested food, weight loss, the affects of weight loss (both the positive interpretations and the negative health and perceptions,) the whole health of the main character (mind, body, and spirit,) relationships (between siblings, between family members, amongst friends, peers, and boyfriend/girlfriend, and of course, high school dramatics.

Something of Substance is a Young Adult novel that expands on a teenage girl's experience with body image, battling a dangerous eating disorder. The author, Tia Souders, did a marvelous job delivering the reader into a world largely misunderstood, being the downward spiral of being slightly overweight to

becoming obsessive over food, caloric intake, and calories burned. I have never read another book that got as personal as this— detailing the journey and the downfall.

I'm Grace had re-invented herself. She does a physical investigation of her body and writes out the goals she hopes to achieve in desperation of her version of perfection—Armed with inspiration and motivation, she began the rigorous efforts of exercise and portion control and the pounds began to shed, she continued to follow the regimen and journal the foods she ate and the calories accompanied by each.

Everything going into her journal. Pounds and calories aren't the only thing decreasing at alarming rates. Grace's self esteem plummets and her health declines at a slower but steady pace.

This book is a great effort to bring awareness to students and adult readers alike to eating disorders, and recognizing some of the signs. I would have liked if the author/publishers had included an index page on where to find more information and seek help and support. (I apologize, if this is included in certain copies; it was not in my copy.)

High School drama is expertly portrayed once, Grace, and best friend Cara, are included in the “popular” and “cheerleading” cliques. There are backstabbing and a sort of two-timing moment, plenty of “mean girl” antics, after school events, parties, prom, and of course, dating! There are two guys that vie for special attention from Grace. Luca and Jake—who wants to date Grace? Who does she want to date? Which guy will win in the end?

The family seems “normal.” Their structure worked for the purpose of the story. I was troubled by the way the parents were disengaged. The author made great effort to explain the characters with the exception on how the parents often it was as if “who cares where the girls were, what they are doing, or with whom,” versus a few singled out scenarios when there was a third degree interrogation on their whereabouts. All the while, the elephant in the room is never truly being addressed. I just felt a little more detailing would have made it more cohesive and not feel rushed once the story ended and more explanations were given and reparations made.

As for Kelly, Grace's twin—who we are told is the center of the universe at home and everywhere else—yet there is little to allow the reader to invest in her character. She is infrequently involved throughout the book. I felt like I missed something when I read about her because I didn't know what the girls' relationship was, how it evolved, dissolved, etc. As previously stated, the author did make statements to address this.

*Side note: Although these are technically friends, not family, I would like to explain Cara and Jake as well. Cara, is more invested and shows her importance to Grace. I feel there is not enough substance to form a solid opinion, but there is enough to support her relevance within the novel. Jake, on the other hand, is defined and explained and easily significant.

After explaining my opinions, I must add, although I would have enjoyed seeing these developments included, their absence have absolutely not detracted from the actual story. With all the specifics that are related, the story is complete. Since this is the first book I have read by this author, I considered this may be her particular writing style—especially since there was so much detailed in other areas. Or, this may be written from the perspective of a teenager-which offers solutions and resolutions to issues I had as a reader if it is written as shallow and immature due to the character's age.

The author, Tia Souders—self-proclaimed “Writer of Hope. Tugger of Heartstrings,” is definitely making an impact with her books and proudly owning up to her self-coined moniker! I am eager to read the other two books she has written: BETTER THAN THIS and WAITING ON HOPE.

One of my favorite passages:

Chapter 2: Second section

One twenty is perfectly acceptable, I tell myself. It's normal. Normal. My stomach sinks like a rock the second the word registers in my subconscious because normal is average. The worst words I can hear. The ones I have heard all my life, or at least it seems like I have. But when will I ever be anything but average? When will I be better than normal?)

Laura Hernandez (TheVoluptuousBkDiva/YABkDivas) says

This was such a good book and I found myself easily relating to Grace as I can remember the body image issues I too had when I was in high school. The author wrote this in such a way that I often wanted to reach out and put my arms around Grace and the emotions that this story conveys will stay with you long after you have read it. -YA/NA Book Divas

{I requested a copy for reviewing purposes and made no guarantee of a favorable review. The opinions expressed herein are unbiased and my own. }

Mandie says

Something of Substance is a remarkable read! It is a real eye opener for anyone who is having issues with their inner self!

Grace's struggles are real, and they can happen to anyone. I can feel her pain! This story is heart-wrenching and beautiful. My mind is still trying to wrap my head around this book! It's just wonderful, and thought provoking. It will stay with me for a long time to come! I would definitely recommend this book!

I voluntarily read and reviewed an advanced copy of this book. All thoughts and opinions are my own.
