



Five Things I Can't Live Without

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On paper, Nora's life looks perfect. She's moving in with her boyfriend Dan, she has a stable job and a great group of friends. But she's stuck in what she refers to as "meta-life," the plight of overthinking and secondguessing to the point of self-sabotage. One day at work, Nora decides to thwart her meta-life by following her instincts. In what feels like a moment of revelation, she quits her job. Immediately, her meta-life goes into overdrive: What on earth was she thinking--and what is she going to do now? Fortunately, when a friend asks Nora to rewrite her Internet dating profile, she realizes that not only is she good at it, but she really enjoys it. Billing herself as a Cyrano de Bergerac for the lovelorn, Nora finally begins to find professional success. But soon, Nora's meta-life has latched onto the question she's asked so many clients: What are the five things she can't live without? Is her flourishing business one of them? Is Dan? With each new client and each step she takes in her own relationship, she must confront her biggest demon--her self-sabotaging "meta-life." But will she be able to slay it forever?

Five Things I Can't Live Without Details

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From Reader Review Five Things I Can't Live Without for online ebook

Kasia says

I enjoy cheeky chick lit from time to time and have a few favorite authors such as Marian Keyes, Ann Hood, Emily Giffin, Sophie Kinsella and now Holly Shumas. Books about women and their usual mishaps with their boyfriends, horrible jobs, jealous friends and annoying mothers who always call at the wrong time can be boring but not when done in a fun, smart way that teaches me a few things about life and about myself. This novel was not only refreshingly easy to read; it was intelligent and had an actual point!

From the beginning Nora is a self saboteur living a big crazy life in her head - she would rather cut her arm off than bear some small pain on it and over analyzes catastrophic scenarios and runs constant self investigation. On a whim she quits her job as a volunteer at an animal adoption shelter because writing bios for dogs who wouldn't get adopted was not something she truly got into. Instead she decided to write mini bios for people, more accurately - making great profiles for singles that have trouble getting noticed online. From the beginning Nora's own profile - part of the job even though she's not single - is empty and meager but as she meets people and helps them find themselves she shapes up her own profile and finds herself after a very bumpy road to success. Slowly but surely Nora found her own five things she can't live without and it was a lot of fun seeing those ideas take shape from her decisions.

As she helps people out her own life starts to fall apart, friends and family members make her compare her own life to theirs and the move with her boyfriend Dan of six months couldn't be more hasty. Meeting cute strangers in cafes to work on their profiles isn't helping either as something starts to happen. I cannot say another word, this book was a breeze to read, it took me one day, but it was brimming with atmosphere and charm and the ending was the best part, about 40 pages before the final words something grandiose perspired and I was biting my nails unable to put the book down until I finished (at 2:20 am thank you very much). I really didn't expect to adore this book so much but it really grew on me and I'm thrilled to have found a new author who makes me smile.

Charming and refreshing, this book is deeper than it seems, the more I brood over what I read the more I like it! I will definitely be getting the author's second book, out next year.

Donna says

This book is not one of them. A clever concept about a woman who wants to be a writer but can't commit enough to do more than help others rewrite their internet profiles. Not quite a good beach read (altho' that's where I read it) and not quite junk but plenty of angst and self doubt.

Liz says

Gave it the 10% rule (read 10% of the total number of pages), but still couldn't get into it.

Vicki says

So I thought this book was going to be funny, but I don't think I laughed even once. It had potential to be funny, but fell short...

Irene says

I thought this book was awful! The characters weren't appealing and nothing ever grabbed me. It's a story of a near-30 year old woman who doesn't know what to do with her life (not exactly a new story)!! Then she makes all these supposed life-changing decisions, but really they weren't that extreme. I mean who hasn't quit a job and had to find a new one. Come on- let's find some new material to write about. Do not read this book- I don't even know why I finished it (the end, not very climatic).

Margot says

I love a nice lighthearted piece of chic lit, but this one just didn't keep my interest. The plot tried too hard to be believable and just ended up flopping around. Enjoyable, but certainly not the best in the genre.

Kristen says

I really liked the idea of seeing another struggle through their "meta-life" crisis, but whining can't be the answer. So I like the first couple of pages but the rest of the book took me forever to finish.

Mary says

It wasn't bad--- I read it as kind of a palate cleanser from some of the serious stuff I've been reading. And it was light and served that purpose. It just didn't move me the way something less superficial might. Not that I was looking to be moved.

Jessica Kerckhoff says

a quick read with an ok message about the lack of committment which seems to be an epidemic in our country's youth. the writing was rather shallow and the curse words mixed in to the dialogue completely unnecessary.

M says

Well, I could live without this book! Ugh! I hated this book! What the hell is a "meta-life" anyway? I do not "DNF" books, just like I don't walk out on movies. I read the book or sit through a movie, hoping it gets better. In this instance, it did not. I did not like the main character, and that usually is a bad sign. I felt she was too self-absorbed and had the personality of a wet dish rag. Oh, well... on to a new book and a new adventure!

treehugger says

So, this book came to me at the very perfect time in my life (thanks Kimlee!) and it took me very little time to get through it. I picked it up because it sounded "cute" and fairly light, but it ended up really piercing to the heart of many of my current issues.

As she is 29 ("almost 30") and I just turned 28, I felt a lot of her pain regarding her career choices, settling down, relating to her mother and her other girl friends. While the internet dating part was silly and two-dimensional, the relationships in this book carried it towards 5-stars. As a social worker, Shumas brings an amazing insight into psychology and familial, intimate, and inter-friend interactions.

A favorite quote about mothering:

"My mother had been overinvolved through my elementary-school years, but it was nothing compared to how she acted once I got into junior high. She was obsessed with my safety and convinced any bad choice would have dire consequences. I occasionally caught her eavesdropping on my phone conversations, and she tagged nearly every friend as being a 'bad influence.' That was her favorite expression until I turned eighteen. What she didn't realize was that she didn't actually prevent much of what she considered bad behavior; she just drove it out of the house. Well, she succeeded in making me completely anxious while I did it, which is why, for example, I needed to smoke pot before having sex."

HA! Does this smack of anyone else's mother's reaction to adolescence, or what??!!

A favorite quote about figuring yourself out:

"The plain truth of it is, I'm scared a lot. I'm afraid of losing what I have, of wasting my life, of not appreciating anything enough, of never getting anywhere, of being left behind. In my relationships, I've always eventually reached a place where I looked around and said, Is that it? Is that all there is? Once I said yes, it could only be the end. I don't want that to happen anymore. I don't want to keep losing, but I don't know how to win."

As neurotic as it sounded in the book, the descriptions of Nora's "meta-life" could probably describe the inner-dialogue of any female of our generation who over-thinks, over-analyzes, and misses much of the fun of life in doing so....really a triumph as far as documenting how messed up we all are!!

Crystal says

Quick, very light romantic comedy. Not one that I would recommend, but it was okay for a relaxing read

when bored.

Annika De says

This book was given to me because apparently the main character, who is "almost living her life," is reminiscent of me. As much as I hate to say it...she totally is. This character is basically me in 10 years, with a lower BMI (the author included her height and weight for the sole purpose of torturing me). But for real, there is one part where she has a conversation with herself in her head, trying to figure out what she's doing with her life, and I swear I have thought basically the same thoughts.

Still, 3 stars because the book is mediocre and reminded me that I'm a semi-neurotic mess. (On the bright side, apparently I'm not the only one!)

Cursiny says

It was a quick read while riding on the plane. It is about a 29-year old girl that over analyzes her life. She writes on-line dating bios.

Maybe I'm too old to relate.

Cara says

Holy crap, this chick is only a slight exaggeration of my own neurosis. I had no idea there were other people out there chastising themselves for dwelling too much in the meta world. Funny reading, but I hope it doesn't enforce the behavior--I drive myself nuts enough as it is.

Ok, this was a bad one to binge-read. Although I believe the ending should have been uplifting, mostly what I'm feeling is self-hatred for being a less-endearing version of this girl. Ugh.
