

Discovering April

Sheena Hutchinson

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Drama conveyed through passionate dialogue against a vivid setting bolsters this interesting addition to the new-adult genre.

Sometimes you can't see the forest for the trees. Or your hot neighbor for the fact that you knew him when he was a skinny geek with Star Wars sheets. In Sheena Hutchinson's entertaining new-adult novel *Discovering April*, twenty-one-year-old April and her long-term boyfriend break up, and April has to relearn who she is without him. The hunky neighbor is certainly not hurting that process.

April and Hunter have been together forever, but lately they've been drifting apart. Every date seems to turn into a fight, and April is half convinced he's cheating on her. Still, it doesn't lessen the hurt when Hunter decides to end it once and for all. As April sinks into a deep depression, she discovers that she doesn't even know who she is without Hunter. Luckily she has a few new friends to help her out, including her neighbor and onetime childhood best friend, Jared, who suddenly inserts himself back into her life after years of silence.

Hutchinson is good with pacing, and scenes fly by, helped along by Jared's predilection for crazy activities like zip-lining through the woods. She also excels at scenic description, painting vivid pictures of the aforementioned zip-lining, a Halloweenified amusement park, the coffee shop where April works, and the bedroom in her home, though April's college campus remains sketchy.

The limited first-person narration makes April the most developed character, though Jared and one of April's new girlfriends, Ro, both get a little backstory. The potential is there for more interesting development—for instance, more elaboration on what Jared has been doing since his parents died or why his friend Eric feels so protective of him. The April of the present, who hasn't developed any opinions of her own outside of Hunter's, seems at severe odds with the firecracker of past-April, but this transformation isn't fully explored.

The characters are all very passionate and feel and express their emotions strongly. Lines are "screamed" just as often as they are "said," offering little variation or warning before a seemingly calm conversation devolves. April's emotions in particular run hot and cold and she seems prone to screaming at the drop of a hat.

Some suspension of disbelief is required. After her breakup with Hunter, April stays in bed for two weeks without seeming to fall behind in school (even though it's the beginning of the semester) or hearing from her employer. Though the story is set on a college campus, it often reads more like a high school: Ro makes April "wait until after school to finally hear what she has to say," and though April is a junior in college, her math class is just learning how to use infinity in equations. Character reactions often seem too dramatic to be believable, including Jared's overreaction to something April does near the end of the book, though his side is explored in an epilogue written from his perspective, and the drama adds tension to the book's finale.

An additional side plot between April's employer and one of their mysterious regulars, both characters in one of

Hutchinson's other books, adds mystery and a hint of the fantastical.

Well-edited and professionally packaged, this book is sure to appeal to those fond of boy/girl-next-door romances and fans of *Twilight*.

ALLYCE AMIDON (April 29, 2015)

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