

Plan 103f: Seven Characters. One Life. Whose Line Was It Anyway?

Jamie Kershaw

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Plan 103f is a ranging Christian novel in which seven friends pursue their differing dreams.

A compelling friendship develops between seven different people based in North Yorkshire in Jamie Kershaw's Christian novel *Plan 103f*.

Two of the seven friends, Tim and Shane, are athletes. Tim is training for the Olympics, while Shane is a Taekwondo instructor. Alex, who's married to Melanie, is a restaurateur; Shane's sister, Suzanna, works for Alex. The group also includes a business owner, Charlie, and Claire, a budding musician, as well as Ben, an ethics professor and the oldest of the friends. Alex's restaurant in Scarborough, North Yorkshire, is the crew's meeting place.

The events in the novel are organized in a loose chronological order that starts with Tim's preparation for the 2012 Summer Olympics in London. The characters' backgrounds are covered in an intermittent manner, with the narrative returning to the present by its end. Details repeat because of this storytelling method: Ben's plans to get a dog, Alex's goal of starting a café, and descriptions of Suzanna and Shane's close relationship are all returned to. Conflicts arise between the friends, too: Shane opposes Suzanna and Ben's relationship; and Alex gives Claire and Charlie marital advice. But it's the group's shared experiences, as with a get together to celebrate Suzanna's birthday, that make their story feel its most weighty and dynamic. Even so, how these characters, who lead such different lives, came to interact is under explained; the few meetings they have in the text are not sufficient to unify them, or the book's scenes.

Further, the group covers multiple unrelated topics in their exchanges, including psychology, sports, and the philosophy of happiness. Recent events, including Donald Trump's presidency and the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge's wedding, are shoehorned in. And amid these discussions and circumstances, Bible verses are asserted at random. Their lessons and words of instruction tend to be inconsistent with the scenes they appear in (a verse about restoration and healing is placed in a paragraph about Shane's protectiveness toward his sister; a scripture about living by God's instruction appears in a scene in which Alex is thinking about expanding his business).

Most of the book's prose is lively and clear, though its similes and metaphors—of a crusader riding through the night; of a chasm of eternity gaping in front of a face—vary. Some impose religious sensibilities, while others, as of a leopard on the savanna strolling between wildebeests, lions, and cheetahs, prove to be evocative in their scenes. But Ben's fascination with Esperanto leads to further diversions, with whole paragraphs of Bible verses in Esperanto, and a song written in the language, shared, but not translated.

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EDITH WAIRIMU (October 19, 2021)

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