

Team Charlie

Mark Evan

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At the beginning of *Team Charlie*, the title character embarks on a journey of self-discovery as he attempts to uncover who he was before the many voices in his head took over his life. Readers will be more than a little curious about Charlie's history, too, and they will not be disappointed when they follow his journey in Mark Evans' evocative and memorable book.

Charlie Davis is a talented but disturbed middle-aged man. For the past nine years, he's been taken care of by his father due to a mental breakdown. Charlie's situation changes in the book's first few pages because his father is dying.

Charlie's voices, who comprise Team Charlie and have their own unique personalities, add to the constant conversation in his mind, reminding him how he can't get along without them. According to the one he calls Dr. Dekker: "We've been helping you. You have all of us at your beck and call, and who knows you any better than us? We know you, Charlie. We've spent so much time together, sometimes I think we know you better than we know ourselves."

The guileless and hapless Charlie meanders from one southern California place to another, doing what he has to do to survive. He meets and interacts with a variety of memorable characters—including his Aunt Emily, a well-meaning and deeply religious woman, and Arthur, a would-be actor pursuing his dream—never letting on about the voices in his head.

Readers will become invested in Charlie's story; they'll want to see him uncover some of his past and find some sort of happiness in the present, as he continually questions his life as it is and as it was before the voices. Twists and turns keep readers guessing about Charlie's fate until the very end.

Evan's writing is full of wit, humor, and pathos. The chattering dialogue between and among the distinct personalities in Charlie's head is sometimes humorous. The details are evocative, such as the consistency with which Charlie checks the time on his father's wristwatch and his fascination with the old black-and-white movies shown on late night TV. However, numerous editing errors detract from the story.

Well-rounded characters abound, and most of them have something to say about God and religion—two topics touched upon quite frequently. One has to wonder if there's a deeper meaning the author is trying to impart through his characters because of the constant questioning of the existence of a higher power.

The book's cover depicts a keyboard, which represents Charlie's saving grace: his savant-like talent for playing the piano. Charlie has issues, but when he "played the piano, all these feelings dissipated. He found a solace in his music that he couldn't find through any other means."

Readers who enjoy stepping into another's shoes and glimpsing the challenges that are faced will find *Team Charlie* a clever and sympathetic take on mental health.

ROBIN FARRELL EDMUNDS (June 20, 2013)

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