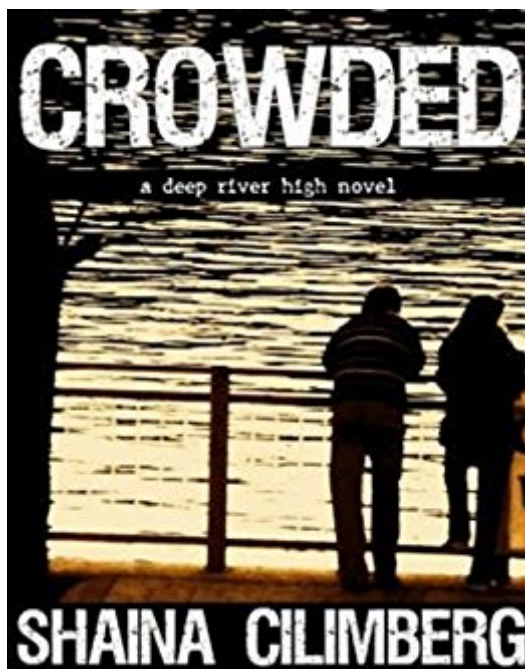


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Crowded (Deep River High: Book One 1)



Synopsis

Cole wants Emily back. He knew it was his own fault, sexting another girl, but now all he can do is everything he can think of to make it up to her. However, the new kid has other plans. From the first day at the new school, Josh has been in love with Emily. He sat on the sidelines during her breakup with Cole and swooped in to pick up the pieces. However, his dark past threatens to drive Emily away. Cole broke her heart. Something doesn't sit right with Josh. However, she loves them both. Who can she trust?

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Customer Reviews

All these four and five star reviews amaze me. Why? Because this book, and its follow-ups, are, well... poorly written. Do not be taken in by the impressive covers and the glowing reviews. I am not one to flat out insult an author, and I admire the gumption it takes to sit down and write a series of novels, but I am really not impressed with the fact that all of this author's friends have done her (and us) the disservice and injustice of telling her that her books are good. Because the hard truth is, at this point, they are not. As an avid reader who trusts reviewers to tell the truth so that I can make an informed choice about whether to buy a book or not, ESPECIALLY from an unknown author, I am

extremely disappointed. This is the kind of review abuse that makes me reluctant to place my trust in self-published authors and their reviewers. Why did I dislike this book and its sequel? Better question: Why did I bother reading the second one after the first was so bad? Well, I bought both at once and even after giving up on the first book 3/4 of the way through, I wanted to give the second one a chance because of the money spent and the topic at hand (school shootings). I really disliked the heavy handed Christian talk that is peppered throughout this book. It felt over-the-top and unnatural. (This is coming from a Christian.) I felt it was pushing an agenda rather than telling a story. I read some Christian fiction (even the radical Left Behind books) but rarely have I come across a series of books that are so unapologetic in their judgment. For instance, the book defines abortion as murder and treats hitting on a previously taken teenage girl to be a cardinal sin. Sorry, but teenagers are hormonal. It is completely normal and even *moral* to try to date a girl you like, even if she recently broke up with someone else. Especially if that someone else isn't someone you were friends with. No teenager is going to call you a "girlfriend thief" and bully you for it, unless they are the ex. It's just not something teenagers do. The Christian characters don't act like Christians (some of them are kind of cruel) and the inevitable

"we-care-about-you-so-we're-going-to-force-you-to-admit-your-problems" intervention is really over the top. One might argue that it's a good thing that a Christian character is so plagued by his inner demons (sorry) that he acts out because it breaks through the cliché Mary Sue/Gary Stu Christian character. Unfortunately, rather than seeming depressed, he simply comes across as bipolar. If this was intentional then bravo, but I highly doubt it because bipolar disorder doesn't just go away after an emotional talk with friends. The characters seemed to think it was natural that someone with an upsetting secret would turn manic, but where I come from, people aren't cruel one minute and saccharine sweet the next - unless, like I said, they suffer from bipolar disorder. In all honesty, this author has some good ideas: she tackles teen pregnancy, male bulimia, bullying, school shootings, and Asperger's syndrome. Those are some impressive choices, but unfortunately the execution is poor. I disliked both books because the writing is not up to par. The characters are flat and the dialogue is unnatural. No one talks like the characters in these novels do. No one behaves the way these characters do. My advice: Take a couple of writing classes by published authors. Spend time immersing yourself in books - both modern and classical. Read lots of YA fiction to learn how teenagers talk. And once you've done all that, rewrite it a few times. Finally, hire an editor. You'll be amazed at how far your writing will come.***I just discovered that the author suffers from both OCD and Asperger's Syndrome. As such, it is impressive that she was able to write and publish a novel, despite the many insecurities that plague these disorders. It also means that the writer is less likely

to understand typical social interactions and develop a "voice" that resonates with readers. Even so, a person can overcome these difficulties with practice and determination. But that won't happen if she isn't given fair and honest feedback. Thus, it is even more imperative that her writing circle friends give her honest feedback so that she can become a better writer. And as reviewers it is just as important that we offer critical insight. Maybe then she can write a smarter, tighter novel that is able to develop the ideas she has in a more natural voice.

Christian teenage drama touching on a lot of issues- male bulimia, abortion, bullying, partying, sexting, social media, parent abuse, cutting. Very nicely written. Showing teen issues of growing up and the dating issues- unwanted advances, gossiping, feeling inferior, feelings of suicide. This book touched on so much and showed that there are consequences- lasting consequences for those actions. It also showed the struggle of forgiveness and being new through Christ and not forgiving yourself. This would make a great book for teen Sunday school or teen youth retreat conversations. I would hope that many teens read this book and take something away from it. Parents would do well to read it to remind them about high school pressures and learn about modern teen pressures.

This writer has quickly become one of my favorites in the young adult genre. The characters are realistic and the dialogue ring true and natural. The storyline itself is fresh, contemporary and quite relevant. I am looking forward to reading more from this very talented young author.

Today's teens deal with more issues and peer pressures than ever, and fail as much as older and more experienced people. It's also refreshing to see parents exhibited in a positive, rather than perfect or preachy light.

Shaina Climberg presents a very realistic picture of today's teen issues while incorporating the transforming message of the Gospel within her storyline. Each of her main characters (especially Cole and Josh) are depicted thoroughly. The stories that define each of them are compelling. Like Shaina's third installment of Deep River High, *To Be Sane, Crowded* is written in a very youthful voice. In fact, reading this book, I can see how her writing is gradually developing by the time she published *To Be Sane*. I applaud her ability to usher her readers into the inner thoughts of teens who battle with their carnality while attempting to live according to their new faith in Christ. Josh's transformation from who he was to who he becomes is conveyed well to the point where I can imagine other readers, like myself, can experience a very heartfelt examination of his battles (that

began from his past, as written). Cole's battles are as realistic as Josh's - but far more common, as readers will discover. His conflicts with Josh stem from his own personal demons but also from his self-imposed problems with Emily. Emily finds herself in their crossfire and battling her own uncertainties in this story that looks at how many from our churches' youth groups - from strong to weaker Christians - interact in places where all masks are removed and motives of the heart are put to the test.

In her first novel, Cilimberg's *Crowded* hits home. The author doesn't beat around the bush when it comes to difficult issues like bulimia, abortion, drinking, sexting and bullying. There were a few places I found it a bit heavy, but I think this story will hit home for many, many teens in today's high schools. My favorite character in this book was Cole. My heart went out to him throughout his journey, and his wake-up calls were well timed and aptly placed. Emily was strong and a character teen girls could look up to. I found her forgiving yet carefully guarded heart to be noble. Josh had a tremendous amount to overcome, but Cilimberg wrote his journey toward mercy with a great amount of realism. There's no doubt in my mind that we'll be seeing a lot more from this author in the years to come!

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