



Broken Strings

Maria Farrer

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It is the story of a brilliant young violinist, her determination and struggle to achieve her dreams and the discovery that she is at the center of an extraordinary secret that has pulled apart her family for two generations. Jess, a talented 17-year-old violinist, suffers from stage-fright as she auditions for a place at a prestigious music school. Her family do not have enough money for her to continue to study so when she fails, she vows not to play again. Until her wealthy grandmother - estranged from her family since Jess's mother fell pregnant - shows up at their doorstep and promises six months of tuition in exchange for Jess moving to live with her. Once ensconced in her grandmother's rich, but empty, life she starts to uncover the mystery of why her grandmother never spoke to her mother again, and the secret which tore her family apart.

Broken Strings Details

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From Reader Review Broken Strings for online ebook

Emily Mead says

Read reviews, see awesome GIFS and see my rambling thoughts at my blog, The Loony Teen Writer

Today I'm going to be reviewing this book with my charming sister Sophie.

You may have heard things about her. For instance that a) when we watch movies together, I'm not allowed to pick animated movies or Harry Potter.

But you also might have heard that b) she bought me books for my birthday, so I guess she's alright.

Sophie: and c) I give the best book reviews

Emily: you wish. Anyway, let's talk about Broken Strings. You gave it five stars.

Sophie: ya

Emily: so first of all we have our main character, Jess, who is kind of a brat (like Sophie, incidentally). She's sarcastic in the most pigheaded way possible, and runs off with her grandmother to play violin after never having met this woman in her life.

Sophie: I liked the sarcasm, but she was kind of a wuss. And a user. Like, she only went off with her grandmother because she had the money to fuel her dream. Otherwise, why else would she have gone? But she also had tantrums about her music teacher and god knows what else and it's just very annoying, and unusual, seeing as though she has such a sarcastic, independent personality.

Emily: So you gave it five stars, which is two more stars than I did, which means you must have liked it. (dear readers, she's given 5 stars to only like 8 books in her lifetime, so this is kind of a big deal)

Sophie: More like 15.

Emily: *types this*

Sophie: How dare you. I really didn't like Stefan, one of the male leads, and I also didn't really like Charlie, the other male lead.

Emily: Oh my gosh, woman, what DID you like about this book?

Sophie: I dunno. I just liked reading it and it was a quick read and idk.

Emily: My eloquent sister, everyone.

Sophie: I'm very articulate.

Emily: Hmm.....anyway, so this book has a lot of music. Unlike my dear sister, who gave up piano when

it got too hard (boo hoo)...

Sophie: It wasn't too hard, I just hated my teacher. What was her name again?

Emily: That's not nice. Anyway, I didn't give up piano, and even though piano is a bit different to violin (ha, a BIT) I really enjoyed the musical aspect of this.

Sophie: Hmm no. I found that part the most frustrating because I didn't understand a word. I mean, I could tell that Farrer was dumbing it down for everyone to understand but some of it is just not understandable to someone who doesn't play an instrument. Jess often talks about how she needs to feel the music, and that's just not comprehensible (I don't even know if that word fits there, whatever).

Emily: Sophie's not the writer in the family.

Sophie: K. The thing I think I liked about the book was that it may be really unrealistic in parts (running off with a grandmother you've never met), but the struggles she deals with are all too real, like her parents' struggles with money, the lack of friends she has, Jess' ambition and her relationship with her family.

Emily: I also really enjoyed the parts where Jess wasn't Classical Music Jess but instead Not Classical Music Jess. You could tell from her (very whiny) interior monologues that despite how much she loves violin, she's also stifled by it, and her escape from that was one of my favourite parts to read about. In many parts, it's a well-crafted story about growing up and music and family – and, of course, second chances.

Sophie: Also, (kind of spoilers), there's kind of a love triangle in the book but it wasn't that big of a deal.

Emily: Plus, both guys were completely boring and didn't do anything for me.

Sophie: That wasn't the end of my sentence. I was GOING to say that there is also the adoration between Jess' grandmother and one of her good friends, Mr Ritchie, which I found completely fantastic to read.

Emily: YES, MR RITCHIE. He was my favourite character. This is one thing we agree on...right?

Sophie: shoosh

Emily: Don't mind her. She just can't admit that sometimes we agree on things. Like how amazing Harry Potter is.

Sophie: Lies. But I'll give you the Mr Ritchie thing. In a book which was often all about the problems in Jess' life and could become very involved sometimes, he was a refreshing character who could turn any situation around.

Emily: So there you have it. That's our joint thoughts on Broken Strings by Maria Farrer.

? Zeta Sky☆ says

This book was phenomenal ! It encouraged me to pick up my violin after all these years, too, so that was a bonus. I really related to Jess, her determination and failures and longing for success, and I fell in love with

the love interests myself! She represents a certain sort of teenager - one that admittedly, even I go through sometimes. (Stroppy and talkative. Doesn't always listen to elders.

You don't have to love 100% of a main character in a book - you just have to enjoy the story! I totally did!) The themes in this book...they certainly make you think: people really do have personal, private reasons for how they act a certain (or peculiar) way. For example, the story of the protagonist's grandmother isn't revealed until the very end. The rest of the book, she's pretty much like an evil character. But she had her reasons. I think that's what gives "Broken Strings" an edge amongst competitors. It has substance.

Amaris Reads says

Loved the premise. Too many cliches, annoying protagonist and unnecessary drama for me but still a good read. Great to empathise with Jess, as a developing violinist myself

readingnow says

A bit boring, cliched and cringe-worthy but still managed to read it in about 3 days. It got better in the end when everything made sense.

Kelly (Diva Booknerd) says

3½ Stars.

<http://www.divabooknerd.com/2014/07/b...>

Broken Strings was a surprise read. I prepared myself for the inevitable cliched contemporary, but it was engaging and entertaining. Aside from the musical inaccuracies, I found I was unable to tear myself away from Jess's story. Jess is an overachiever and seen as a musical prodigy, but sadly only caters to her own needs, as evidence of leaving after her parents had specifically forbid her and left them only a note. Her father then gives Jess an ultimatum, to either come home or she won't be welcomed again. It was frustrating and I can't imagine parents that supported and nurtured her talent for eight years would suddenly disown her so blatantly. But rather than worry about their parental distress, she pines for Stefan.

She hasn't seen or heard from Stefan since she fled the stage during their audition and with her phone in ruin, she has no idea how her career ending stage fright impacted on her accompanist. Jess is self absorbed and her only interest in Stefan is only to her own benefit, believing she may very well be in love with him. But when her grandmother's driver Charlie shows an interest, she's reluctant but still crosses the line into dangerous territory. Charlie is willing to risk his job for a girl who is only interested in a distraction. But even with its discrepancies, the storyline was still entertaining and surprisingly a quick read for its length.

None of the characters were relatable or too in depth, and only the elderly piano virtuoso Mr Richie had any likability. If Jess hadn't been so self indulgent, more readers may have been able to connect with her passion. For a girl who supposedly understands the discipline and hard work it takes to reach her goals, she does an awful lot of complaining when her grandmother instills the same values in her education. If you're looking for a purely entertaining read, then definitely give it a go. The overall storyline and uncovered secrets will keep you guessing until the very end and despite its flaws, I quite enjoyed it.

Chiara says

A copy of this novel was provided by Scholastic Australia for review.

I'm not entirely sure where to start off writing a review for *Broken Strings*. The one thing I know for sure is that I did not really like it. And I guess I'll try and go through the reasons why.

The big no-no for me in *Broken Strings* was the main character, Jess. The blurb says that she's seventeen (even though she doesn't turn seventeen until about halfway through the book), but you could have fooled me. I have never read about a 16/17 year old acting so childish in my entire life. And that is saying a lot, because I read more than my fair share of YA books. But *Broken Strings* takes the cake when it comes to misrepresented teenagers. I actually felt kind of insulted and offended, to be honest – that a teenager had been portrayed in such a petulant way.

Now I know teens can be ferocious little things, but I know that they also know appropriate social behaviour – of which Jess had none. She threw frequent tantrums, talked back to her parents and grandmother *constantly*, was not grateful for one tiny thing in her life, and spent 99.999999% of her time bemoaning her circumstances – which were not bad at all.

On from this, Jess has a fade-out sex scene in *Broken Strings* which I found utterly confronting. No one that immature should be having sex. It was almost inappropriate, considering how the girl behaved around people – including the guy she has sex with.

There are two love interests in this novel. We have Charlie, a 23 year old guy, and Stefan, a fellow teenager.

I found it ridiculous that Charlie had any interest (in even being friends) with Jess, since she was just so *childish*. Anyone I know (being 21 makes me pretty close in age to Charlie) would see Jess as some ridiculous unappreciative child. He certainly wouldn't want to be involved with her romantically. And Stefan is no better. Jess is constantly shunning him and talking back to him and ignoring him. I'm pretty sure that guys don't take that kind of crap from girls, but hey.

The violin aspects were quite interesting, but they weren't really the focus of the book, and Jess spent most of the violin scenes complaining (surprise, surprise).

The “big secret” was quite guessable, and I suppose a little inappropriate (again). Now, I know that YA can be dark and I *love* that about the genre, but this entire book almost felt like a middle grade novel about a thirteen year old girl with these themes (like sex, and this “secret”) thrown in there to appeal to an older and therefore wider audience.

All in all, I was not a fan of *Broken Strings*, from the main character, the threadbare plot, and the general falseness of the whole story.

Gabriela says

First of all this book is about this girl, Jess, who is trying to get a music scholarship but ruins her chance to get one when she messes up her performance. She is given a second chance by her grandmother who she thought was dead and moves to London with her for 6 months.

Anyways, I had an expectation about this book but at the same time I didn't know what to expect. (I know it doesn't make any sense but that's just me). So I read the first couple of chapters the writing is okay but it's just Jess (as the narrator) moaning about her grandmother and how strict she and her teachers are. It's quite annoying.

When I got to the middle of the book I just started thinking that I wanted to finish the book so that I could read another one (which I'm about to do when I finish this review). Nothing really interesting happens for about 100 pages and I felt like sleeping. I usually don't criticise books and an author's work but... But luckily when I got to the last few chapters the book got interesting. Jess found out about her grandmother's past and why she wasn't a good mother to Jess's mother and more. And I have to say was not expecting that.

Overall the book was not a complete disaster, it had a few romantic moments, sarcastic and funny moments and annoying moments.

Aaliya says

great book loved it so much. recommend to all to read.

Penny says

I was enjoying it...I was...but I just wanted MORE. I take that as a good thing though!

Alana says

So I read this book awhile ago... and I've been putting off writing this review because I really hate being mean about books when I know authors put time and effort into writing. So I'm really sorry for the things I'm about to say.

Broken Strings by Maria Farrer follows Jess, a 17-year-old violinist who bombs the most important audition of her life and consequently fails to obtain a scholarship that would have secured her place in an esteemed music school. Enter Jess' estranged (and presumed dead) grandmother who offers her a six-month deal to live in London and be tutored and trained by the best musicians and musical therapists (who knew that was a thing?) in the vicinity. So Jess packs up her things, runs away from her parents and moves in with her grandmother where she proceeds to moan and whine about every last living thing.

Alright, I admit a minimum of six hours a day sitting on a chair practicing violin would not be the easiest of tasks, and her grandmother is on the stand-offish side a majority of the time. But Jess is honestly the most unlikeable character I've read in a long time (and recently I've read some really unlikeable characters).

I get it. She's a teenager and doesn't understand that everyone's just trying to help. But really girl?
REALLY?

I'm sorry... but your long lost grandmother comes out of nowhere and offers you free music tuition with the best people in the classical music industry... and all you do for the majority of the 352 pages is complain about how much your life sucks?

Okay, I may be a tad harsh... I can understand that the idea of a grandmother who you thought was dead suddenly appearing alive and well on your doorstep, is completely overwhelming. But I just couldn't get over how ungrateful Jess was. Like seriously, there's snarky and condescending that is mildly tolerable... and then it gets to a point where it's like really? Must you turn everything into this melodramatic monologue about how unfair life is? I was seriously losing my patience with this character and the book overall.

And then we get to this 'love triangle' between the musical virtuoso Stefan and Charlie, her grandmother's driver. Stefan she hasn't heard from since she ran out of her audition, although this proves to be a big (and rather silly) misunderstanding on both of their parts. Charlie the poor sucker is willing to put the job Jess' grandmother gave him, which virtually saved him from poverty, on the line for Jess who's not even really interested in him as more than a friend, and is blatantly using him as a distraction. NO. JUST NO.

And that's about the time I closed the book and refused to finish it. I just didn't care enough about Jess or the flimsy 'love triangle' to want to find out what happened at the end. It was uninteresting and I felt no need to finish it... so I didn't.

I was incredibly disappointed because the premise sounded mildly interesting and I could see this storyline actually being done well... but it just wasn't. This is my first DNF as a co-blogger and I hope it's my first and only one! (Maybe I've jinxed myself now for saying that)

Thank you to Scholastic Australia for a copy in exchange for an honest review!

Review can be found on: <http://www.thoughtsbyj.com/arc-review...>

Kathryn says

I totally recommend this book to any teenaged girl. It is a fantastic book and I'm now behind on a bit of school work (oops) because I just couldn't put the book down. As a violinist myself and a girl who's love life has been turned upside down, I loved every word of this brilliant story. The only down side to it is that I've finished the story, now my life doesn't feel the same knowing that there isn't any more to read. Haha! I've really, really struggled to find a style of writing that I enjoy to read. Now I've read Broken Strings, I know exactly what to look for.

Thank you Maria Farrer xx

PS. This story would make a brilliant film!!

Tash says

Reviewed for Confessions From Romaholics

Review copy kindly provided by Scholastic in exchange for a honest review

The Broken Strings was sitting on my desk for ages and I finally decided to read this book as I wanted something different from a contemporary YA book. Jess is a musical prodigy who is on the cusp of achieving her dream to go to a prestige music school. However she has stage fright and she fails at her audition. Little does she know this is the start of a journey that will take her to surprising places.

Jess only cares about getting into that school and now her dreams are dashed she thinks until she offered something she never thought she would receive. Her grandmother who she never thought she existed offers her to pay and give her the opportunity she craves. Without backwards glance to her parents wants and more engrossed with her own wants and needs. She escapes and goes to London hoping for a better future. Her parents are obviously against this and her father offers her a choice come home or be unwelcome like her grandmother. And here where it starts to unravel for Jess, she doesn't care about the choice, she more worried about Stefan as he has no clue where she is now. Talk about selfish and this how Jess acts for most of the book.

I don't know what to say. As someone who played an instrument younger and grew up with people who have taken it further with a chosen instrument. I found her to be fake and whiny little brat. Jess doesn't try her best on her own steam to get what she wants. She runs off to her grandmother who she never met but offers everything she wants. Her grandmother is more driven than her to help her achieve what she wants. And what is that ?

She has reached the highest level in violin so what does she want to do to take it the next level , become a first chair in a world-renowned orchestra or one-off the other possibilities out there. However this push to the background as the many issue is the love triangle and how it goes back and forth between them for most of the book. Jess doesn't want to follow what her grandmother sets out for her . She wants to have fun because in her opinion her grandmother plan sucks and is hard.

It a weird one , she has a crush on Stefan who is her accompanist, the boy she left behind but when she reaches London she gets entangled with older guy and it becomes this weird YA/NA mismatch story. She torn between these two , the older guy Charlie who is 23 and Stefan the teenager boy who has always been there for her. Stefan is her accompanist and plays an important role in this novel. Her teen love interest, Jess last tie to back home, and she concern that she wrecked anything potentially happening with him.

Only in a purely self-interested way though, she fancies being in love with him and but then there is Charlie willing to risk his job and offers her exciting and unknown. I don't know what make of this contemporary music love story the end. The older characters such her grandmother and Mr Riche and to extent Stefan are the redeeming features of this story otherwise it would be definitely a two stars read for me. As I wanted to shake Jess and some of the other characters by the end and ask them what they were thinking.

That why I give it 3 stars.

For more of my reviews, visit Confessions From Romaholics. And drop by the blog's Facebook page

TheCosyDragon says

This review has been crossposted from my blog at The Cosy Dragon . Please head there for more in-depth

reviews by me, which appear on a timely schedule.

Jess has a desire to play classical violin beyond everything else in her life. Focused on her goal, she is blind to other things that are happening around her until her bid for a scholarship fails. Drawn in by a grandmother she's never met, she has another chance to make it with violin.

At times, I found this novel too painful to put down. It seemed like one thing after another turned out incorrectly. Jess just couldn't help getting into trouble! It doesn't help that her grandmother is very out of touch with children, and always has been.

I loved the way the characters were developed. Even the 'servants' had attitudes and opinions, even if the grandmother tried to suppress them. It's hard to fit all of that into one novel, but Farrer manages it beautifully.

I didn't really understand Jess' reluctant teenager-ing. I mean, sure rebel, but you still play Classical violin! Who wouldn't want an excuse to wear nice clothes? Sure, not dresses (I can understand that, I never loved them much until recently myself), but a lovely pair of dress slacks would have done the job.

I wasn't satisfied with the way things ended up with Charlie. Sure, age gaps are a hard thing, but still! Jess never should have gotten involved with anyway, she is in such a mess herself, not to mention not having time for anything!

I had never heard of any of the musicians in the novel, so I'm still not sure if they are 'real people' or not. Probably not. But the music, oh, the music. Well worth listening to. I'd even go so far as to say listen to it while reading the novel! It's nice when the author can add atmosphere in this way, just with a mention of music.

I received this novel from Scholastic in return for an honest review. Personally, I would have purchased this novel anyway if I had seen it. I look forward to seeing more from this author.
