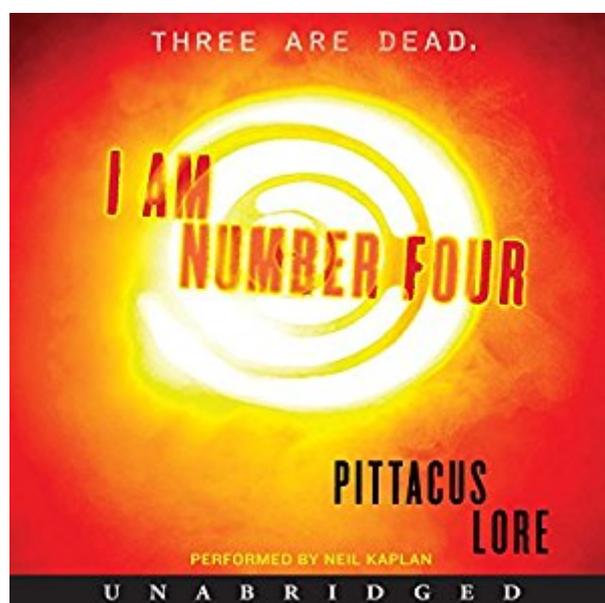


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# I Am Number Four



## Synopsis

Nine of us came here. We look like you. We talk like you. We live among you. But we are not you. We can do things you dream of doing. We have powers you dream of having. We are stronger and faster than anything you have ever seen. We are the superheroes you worship in movies and comic books but we are real. Our plan was to grow, and train, and become strong, and become one, and fight them. But they found us and started hunting us first. Now all of us are running. Spending our lives in shadows, in places where no one would look, blending in. we have lived among you without you knowing. But they know. They caught Number One in Malaysia. Number Two in England. And Number Three in Kenya. They killed them all. I am Number Four. I am next. Also included is a sneak listen to the first chapter of the next book in the series. Enjoy!

## Book Information

Audible Audio Edition

Listening Length: 11 hours and 32 minutes

Program Type: Audiobook

Version: Unabridged

Publisher: HarperAudio

Audible.com Release Date: August 3, 2010

Whispersync for Voice: Ready

Language: English

ASIN: B003YV7AKK

Best Sellers Rank: #90 in Books > Teens > Literature & Fiction > Action & Adventure > Science Fiction #108 in Books > Teens > Romance > Fantasy #138 in Books > Audible Audiobooks > Children's Books > Science Fiction & Fantasy

## Customer Reviews

I'm going to write this review while grappling with the emotional conflicts I Am Number Four left me with: disappointment and "eh". Before I wrestle those demons, I want to start straight off and say that I saw the movie first. I had heard about the book from a few friends and wasn't interested. But, the movie previews looked reasonably enjoyable. I like action, explosions and super powers. Frankly, I was expecting two hours of mind numbing violence and cool chase scenes. That's pretty much what it was. I liked the movie, despite it's abysmal reviews. It reminded me a bit of Xmen and a lot of Smallville. That's a promising mix. There's some romance, but it's very light if not perfectly easy to ignore... which... is definitely a fault in its own right, but take it for what it is. After watching it, I

decided to get the book. I could see potential, and since Hollywood is not often kind to YA book adaptations I gave the original the benefit of the doubt. I wanted a little more depth to the story and figured it would expand much further in text. I found the book on sale and took a leap of faith with my wallet instead of checking it out from the library. A red flag went off when I opened it and saw the page layout. The page numbers will tell you 440. I cannot describe how misleading this is unless you personally open the book and look at the margins. They are big enough to drive a whaling ship through them. Condensed, it probably would not push 250 pages. But, like I said, leap of faith and all. Welcome to my demons. This book is written by two different people and wow can you tell. The problem is that one writer is better than the other. Some of the chapters are so dry and brittle that I caught myself staring at the wall instead of reading. There is a minuscule (if any) amount of description or voice when these pieces of the books pop up. It's written with the power and dignity of a grocery list.- I just entered a house.- There is a couch.- A girl was sitting on the couch.- I hope Sara likes me.- Golly Mark is a jerk. This is NOT what I expected. I wanted expansion, not limitation. What goes on inside John's head? I dunno. Not very much apparently. The writing is so bland that it's kind of disgusting. I wasn't expecting a literary masterpiece, but something other than "the sky looked blue today. I'm wearing nike sneakers." would have sufficed. The direct line that broke me was, "he said confusedly". Author 2's parts of the book are... I loath to say "better", so let's go with "bearable"... because there's actual prose. John sometimes even has personality and emotions! Whoa! It wasn't fantastic, or even near an acceptable second draft, but it was better than reading the back of a cereal box, which is something I guess. Most of it takes place in high school, centered around John acting out life as a typical kid. Sometimes he goes to math class and his hands start glowing. Oooooooooo~. Do you remember much from day-to-day highschool life? No? That's because it's BORING. This. Should. Be. Easy. The plot is about a teenager with developing superpowers who is on the run from murderous aliens. How do you mess that up? Their story is derivative and needs strong characterization and confident writing to stay afloat. It has neither, so it sinks. James Frey thinks his audience is stupid and can't handle depth or subtlety. That's all there is to it. Oh. Right. James Frey. Let's talk about him really quick. I'm sure most goodreads members are already privy to this information by now, but James Frey (author of A Million Little Pieces, a supposed memoir where he lied about everything which, by the way, is the direct opposite of a memoir) is one of the two people who worked on it. By 'worked on it' I mean had a ghostwriter named Jobie Hughes create the story and most of the writing and then not really give him credit or money. Frey is running a so called young adult fiction machine-- an assembly line made up of inexperienced, new writers who are so desperate for publishing that they'll consider his slimy hand.

He wants to mass produce the "next Harry Potter", as he so lovingly put it. If you google "James Frey Full Fathom Five" you'll dig up plenty of information on it, including the contract.

Man, this book is seriously garnering heaps of exposure, what with its already having been optioned for a movie, this movie scheduled for a 2011 release. I AM NUMBER FOUR, which admittedly is an awesome title, is penned by someone named Pittacus Lore, who claims to be a ten thousand year old space alien seeking to warn us of hostile other aliens currently lurking in our midst. This is cute. Except that two folks named Jobie Hughes and James Frey are the actual authors. The high stakes premise goes like this: Nine alien children have fled their annihilated homeworld of Lorien and have sought refuge on Earth. Having scattered to the winds, they are being hunted down, one by one, by a separate and malevolent extraterrestrial race from a dying planet. Thanks to a quasi-mystical protective charm placed on the Nine, they can only be killed in order (although, my bet is that Number One doesn't regard this charm as all that "protective"). As the book opens, three of the Nine have already been tracked down and murdered. So we come to Number Four. His name used to be Daniel Jones. It used to be something else before that, and then something else before that, and so on. Ten years on Earth, ten years of hiding and staying always on the move and staying safe and alive... this is the life of Number Four and his guardian and mentor whose name is Henri (oddly, Henri's alien accent sounds very much like a French accent). Number Four has just collected a new scar circling his right ankle, this an indicator that another of the Nine has been recently slain. Three scarred rings around his ankle, and so Number Four knows he's next. And it's time to pack up the bags again, time again to get the eff out of Dodge. Henri and Number Four - or "John Smith," his new assumed name - have always gravitated to tiny towns, conjecturing that their hunters would stick out more like sore thumbs in tiny towns. They end up in Paradise, Ohio. For John it's another try at blending in in school but without making friends, because no one can be trusted. Except that it's a little different this time. John Smith befriends a geeky kid who is a science-fiction enthusiast. He adopts a stray mutt named Bernie Kosar (and Bernie Kosar, by the way, is easily the book's breakout character). And John Smith also meets a girl. So much for staying on one's guard. My first impression, while reading the first few pages of this book, was that this whole thing is very reminiscent of two short-lived television sci-fi shows: THE POWERS OF MATTHEW STAR from the early '80s and, more recently, ROSWELL. But then, pressing on, I guess it's inevitable that comparisons to the X-Men would surface. The Nine teens are holding up while waiting for their superhuman powers (called Legacies) to develop. These Legacies vary, and there's no guessing as to which abilities a Nine would latch up to. Number Four is at that age when his Legacies would

shortly begin to crop up. And they do start cropping up, one by one, and there is a really fun factor in watching our sympathetic alien boy try to cope with each incoming talent. Gratifyingly, the alien hunters from Mogadore aren't only downright intimidating, they seem even more powerful than the Nine and their guardians (and the guardians aren't at all equipped with superpowers). This drives up the suspense. What I AM NUMBER FOUR has going for it is its irresistible sci-fi/superhero premise and a pace that really moves. Number Four is a likable protagonist, although someone needs to explain to him the exact definition of keeping a low profile. After all, dude is supposed to be in hiding and fitting in. He really doesn't do much of either. None of the supporting cast break out of their stereotypical mold, and only the scene-stealing dog Bernie Kosar seems to be an original character. I will say that John's geeky pal Sam does come up with a touching reason for why he's such a sci-fi freak and why he wears those fugly prescription glasses. And as much as I dig Sarah, her and John Smith's teen romance feels like any other teen romance in YA lit. It comes in a nice, predictable package. Sarah is gorgeous and nice... and, well, bland. Another issue I have concerns a high school bully whose turnaround comes too abruptly. Perhaps the most intriguing element in the book concerns the mystery surrounding the very peculiar Bernie Kosar (see how I keep coming back to the dog?). I AM NUMBER FOUR is the first book in a planned six-book series, and it reads very visual, especially in the explosive action sequences, and no wonder this is being made into a movie. Number Four performs bits of astounding derring-do throughout the book, but things get really amped up during the final 90 pages. It all culminates in one of those blistering "Release the Kraken!" Jim Butcher-type paranormal (except it's sci-fi) shoot-'em-outs. I can see why Bay and Spielberg are salivating so. I liked this book, and will most definitely be there when the sequels come out. But here's the thing, if you're hanging your hat on something that's on par with the likes of Suzanne Collins' Hunger Games series or even Michael Grant's Gone novels, this won't suit you. I AM NUMBER FOUR isn't as immersing or resonant as those books. THE HUNGER GAMES made me well up in places. GONE reads like LORD OF THE FLIES as co-authored by Rod Serling and Stephen King. I AM NUMBER FOUR had me eating up all the "superhero without a costume" elements, and it's always nice when you can transfer yourself onto a central character who is superstrong and superfast and who won't back down from bullies. I did really like that a surprise character shows up very late in the book, and it looks like she'll be heavily featured in future installments. I'll give this one 4 stars out of 5, because I'm shallow like that and big, bold, f/x-heavy fighty fights never ever fail to transfix me. And because the dog Bernie Kosar is in it.

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