



The Road to Amazing

Brent Hartinger

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“I think gay guys like weddings more than anyone. And it's not because we want to destroy marriage, like some people say. It's because we really, really want to get married!”

Russel Middlebrook is gettin' hitched!

The wedding is taking place in a remote lodge on an island in Puget Sound. Russel and his husband-to-be have invited all their close friends to spend the whole weekend together beforehand.

And for the first time in his life, Russel is determined to not be neurotic, and not over-think things.

But that's before things start going wrong. Who expected a dead killer whale to wash up on the beach below the inn? And what's this about a windstorm approaching? Then there's the problem of Russel's anxious fiancé, who is increasingly convinced the whole thing is going to be a disaster.

Meanwhile, the wedding is taking place near the ruins of a small town, Amazing, where, a hundred years earlier, the people supposedly all disappeared overnight. Why does it feel like the secret at the end of the road to Amazing has something to do with Russel's own future?

Can Russel's friends Min, Gunnar, Vernie, and Otto somehow help him make it all make sense?

The Road to Amazing, the final book in the Russel Middlebrook Futon Years trilogy, is a story about endings and beginnings, and also about growing up and growing older. But mostly it's a story about love and friendship—about how it's not the destination that makes a life amazing, but the people you meet along the way.

Praise for Brent Hartinger:

“Hits the narrative sweet spot.”
— NPR's All Things Considered

“Downright refreshing.”
— USA Today

“The Road to Amazing is a great, introspective story.”

– Rainbow Book Reviews

“Sometimes a book just sucks me in so hard that I almost cannot break away to do anything functional... [With The Road to Amazing,] I felt like I was on a sun-dappled raft floating along a warm vista-filled river while reading this book. I was so engaged ... I'll be honest, when I read the blurb for this book — after reading the actual book — I felt wistful and melancholy. I'm not ready to be done with Russel and Kevin.”
– V's Reads

“The Road to Amazing has brought out a much-needed purpose in my life ... I found so much truth in it. ... It's not just an unusual cast of characters that include a famous actor, a rich friend, intelligent and brilliant individuals that add to the magic of this series; it's the truth behind each character.”

– Sensible Reason Magazine

The Road to Amazing Details

Date : Published March 14th 2016 by Brent Hartinger

ISBN :

Author : Brent Hartinger

Format : ebook

Genre : Lgbt, Romance, M M Romance, Contemporary

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From Reader Review The Road to Amazing for online ebook

Ulysses Dietz says

Amazing doesn't exist anymore, but the overgrown road that leads to its ruins is still here. It is also a metaphor, lyrically and beautifully woven into the fabric of this story.

Less trauma-filled than Brent Hartinger's last book about the grown-up Russel Middlebrook and his boyfriend Kevin Land, "The Road to Amazing" is a thoughtful consideration of what friendship, marriage, and love really mean, wrapped up in an "I Love Lucy" episode. As always, it is well-written, and Russel Middlebrook's voice—which we've all known since he was in high school—is steady and familiar and, in this instance, remarkably wise.

What purports to be the story of Russel and Kevin's wedding weekend is really the ultimate story of Russel coming to grips with what being an adult, and embracing an adult life, really is. Things go comically wrong, and Russel, as the narrator, acknowledges his audience consistently throughout the narrative, to assure us that he knows what's going on. This, at least for me, afforded a cozy intimacy with Russel (and hence the author) that drew me into the book emotionally more than any of the previous volumes.

The big point of this touching and amusing installment in Kevin and Russel's life together is the meaning of marriage itself; marriage in the context of two twenty-five-year-old gay men who have known each other since middle school. Set in a beautiful modern house in an idyllic bluff on Vashon Island, the sit-com plot is really nothing more than a framework that helps us understand various important people who have been part of Russel and Kevin's lives through the entire series of books: Gunnar the nerd genius, Min the political-activist bisexual, Otto the burn survivor turned TV star, Vernie, Hollywood screenwriter and Russel's mentor. Two outsiders, Min's girlfriend Ruby and Kevin's straight college roommate Nate, make up the intimate group staying in the house before the wedding, and also provide contrast and depth as Russel ponders the importance of friendship and personal growth.

What made this book particularly appealing to me—beyond my being a fan of Hartinger's writing—is that, at 58, I found myself in the same position as Kevin and Russel, who could be my sons. After 38 years with the same man, who I met in college, we were finally allowed to marry in 2013 in New Jersey. The significance of an institution that had hitherto been denied us in spite of our shared citizenship with every other American, was very much on our minds as we made our way to our town hall where the mayor would perform a brief ceremony and sign our license. We claimed, when asked, that it was not a momentous occasion, but rather a purely practical step in terms of wills and estates and the future of the two children we adopted as babies two decades ago. But we knew it was something rather more than that. Russel and Kevin come to realize this, too, and that new understanding of their wish to be married transforms Hartinger's book into something bigger, deeper, and more moving.

Cadiva says

Loved it, absolutely loved it. Russel and Kevin are a fabulous pair, perfectly suited and their journeys to happiness over seven books has been at times hilarious, at times heart breaking and at times a chaos of feelings.

I've loved Russel and Kevin since they first made their awkward hesitating steps on the Road to Amazing and seeing them reach that nirvana was a joy. These books just make me happy because Russel and Kevin are real, ordinary people living normal lives and being happy and that's all any of us ever want isn't it?!

Denis says

I haven't read this yet - I was trying to post a review on "the thing I didn't know I didn't know" but between me and the app, something went wrong :-(

If it's anything like the others in the series it'll be excellent.

BWT (Belen) says

I basically binge listened to first *The Thing I Didn't Know I Didn't Know* then *Barefoot in the City of Broken Dreams*. While I liked the first, I didn't particularly connect with the second, so I started *The Road to Amazing* with a bit of trepidation worried I might not like it.

I needn't have worried. Hartinger brings back all the characters I've loved and sets a really sweet tone amidst the chaos of a wedding weekend where so much goes wrong. Dead Orca on the beach below your wedding venue? Check. Huge storms knocking out power? Check. Wedding guests not being able to get to the island the wedding is happening on? Check.

However, through it all Russel keeps his cool (with a lot of help from his friends) and calms nervous groom Kevin (with a lot of help from their friends).

For me, it's truly the supporting cast that makes this series fun, but what makes it really enjoyable is narrator Josh Hurley. **I'll say it again, Josh Hurley really does an excellent job with the different character voices. I also love how he portrays the myriad of expressed character emotions.**

And can I just give a shout out to my boy Gunnar? You may not be easily understood, but you are definitely one of my favorite characters! Love you, boo!

I've enjoyed my time with Russel, Kevin and the gang. My wish for the future? I hope, if there are more installments, that Hartinger will open up the points of view to include Kevin and Minh, Gunnar and/or Otto.

Audio copy of The Road to Amazing provided by Author in exchange of an honest review.

This review has been cross-posted at Gay Book Reviews.

Peter says

A satisfying "end" to Russel's story. I say that because although Russel's story has ended, his world and the world of his friends isn't done as we're now heading into Otto's story. But knowing how much Brent loves Russel, I suspect we haven't heard the last of his POV yet.

Finally after 10 years of angst, late night stinky gazebo rendezvous, breakups, fights and fantastic makeups, and quirky friendships Russel and Kevin are finally getting married. When we left off from the last book Russel surprisingly was the one to propose to Kevin.

When we join them again Russel and Kevin are traveling to the Amazing Inn, the venue they've chosen for their wedding along with several of their close friends Gunnar, Min, Otto, Vernie, and newcomers Ruby and Nate. It's a weekend of being with their close friends and getting ready to make the journey into "grown up" territory. But this weekend doesn't exactly go according to plan and everything under the sun happens to threaten to derail their wedding. But behind it all, Russel and Kevin's love for each other shines through.

Like I said, a satisfying end to Russel's story and the beginning of his and Kevin's journey together as husbands.

I'm still reeling from the last two books and Kevin being the perfect boyfriend and I have no doubt that he's now the perfect husband.

Saskia says

I like HEAs, I can even do HFNs, but I do not like "we love each other now, pretty much, I guess, I mean I do find other guys hot and all, I might like to have sex with someone other than you, we'll just see what happens, let's get married now and if we don't feel the same way in a few years, well... no harm, no foul." That's how this book felt.

Forever Young Adult says

Graded By: Brian

Cover Story: You're in Love. We Get It.

Drinking Buddy: The Non-Idealized Gang

Testosterone Level: Ahem...

Talky Talk: I Always Cry At Weddings

Bonus Factors: History's Mysteries, All My Rowdy Friends

Bromance Status: Goodbye, Old Friend

Read the full book report [here](#).

Lucio Ramirez says

Just beautiful. I really enjoyed the whole series, I kinda grew up with them throughout these last years and I fell in love with every character. However, I identify a lot with Russel so I will really miss him. The relationship with Kevin ended up the best way. Brent, you did an amazing job and I hope you are very proud. Cheers from Rosario, Argentina!

R.J. Seeley says

Another great Russel Middlebrook book. Funny, dramatic and sexy. A great read, and it includes everyone's favourite characters from the entire series.

4 stars.

Jason says

Thank you!

For years I have been reading through the journey of Russel Middlebrook and his friends and lovers. Like Russel and Kevin it has been an off and on relationship; it's not because I don't enjoy reading the books, because I do; it's because it is always sad to have the books come to an end. It has been a 15 year relationship though instead of 10.

I still remember the first time I read Geography Club, I bought it during an amazing hockey road trip from Everett, WA to Kelowna, BC in April 2004. I bought the paperback version at the local Canadian bookstore. My best friend and I were both reading books by the water near the arena while waiting for the playoff hockey game to start. It was a beautiful day and I couldn't stop reading it.

Over the years I have laughed and cried while reading this series, but this by far was my favorite Russel book, and that says a lot. Like Russel's life mine has changed over the past 15 years; in March 2016 I moved out of the beautiful State of Washington for the first time, my best friend passed away from cancer March 2017, and I've gotten older and trying to fight being a single grumpy old man.

What hasn't changed is my love for Brent Hartinger's novels. There hasn't been one I haven't enjoyed. Thank you for writing and cheers to the next book in the journey.

Brent Hartinger says

Yup, I wrote it! It's my book.

Don says

[It was a great we

Arthur Griffin says

Russel Middlebrook is like that best friend you had in high school that you never, ever want to see drift out of your life. Brent Hartinger has created a character who got his start in the seminal work of the Gay YA genre (remember when that wasn't a thing? I do) and bloomed in those stories, starting with the classic Geography Club and going all the way through to The Elephant of Surprise.

And then, in an inspiring move, he actually let Russel grow up! Russel's journey has made the jump from Young Adult to New Adult, and watching him navigate early adulthood has been a wonderful trip, to say the least.

And what happens to a lot of people in their early adulthood? They get married.

The Road to Amazing is all about the weekend before Russel's wedding, and it was just as funny and awkward and engaging as all his stories, but it was also moving in that way life is when your best friend gets married. You know they'll still be your friend and they'll still love you, but things will just be a little different now. Hartinger gets that tone perfectly in his book.

5 stars.

PS - I'm not normally a crier due to mostly being dead inside, but I actually teared up twice while reading this book. If that doesn't prove how good it is, I don't know what does.

Vitor Martins says

Então eu FINALMENTE terminei essa série e estou muito feliz.

Pra ser sincero, achei esse livro bem filler dentro da série, e os acontecimentos não são tão emocionantes assim, mas estou avaliando com 4 estrelas porque criei uma conexão afetiva muito forte com esses personagens.

Depois de ler SETE livros pelo ponto de vista do Russel, é impossível não ficar feliz com o casamento dele (talvez eu tenha chorado com a cena dos votos?).

Pela primeira vez eu finalmente consegui me importar com o Kevin e entender que esses dois merecem ficar juntos. Continuo sendo #TeamOtto pra sempre, mas estou feliz com o desfecho dessa história. E falando em Otto, a melhor coisa em The Road to Amazing é o comeback de todos os personagens maravilhosos dessa série. Min, Vernie e o meu próprio filho Gunnar deixam essa história muito mais especial para quem acompanhou essa jornada toda.

Enfim, uma leitura que pode ser boba pra muita gente, mas pra mim foi muito especial. Porque eu amo o Russel, amo a escrita do Brent Hartinger e vou sentir saudades dessa turminha do barulho!

Veronica of V's Reads says

Third book in this contemporary M/M romance series. It's just so fab.

Sometimes a book just sucks me in so hard that I almost cannot break away to do anything functional, like eat, or use the toilet. This book was close to that status. Russel Middlebrook's voice is one that can take adjusting to, mostly because he's a plain talker. He'll speak his truth all day long, even if that truth is unreliable. And neurotic. I think I have a tiny crush on him.

Okay, enough of the fangirling. Russel and Kevin have known each other since middle school. Their on-again-off-again relationship has been documented in several books but they've been full-on for the past few years and are engaged to be married, and this book is all about the wedding weekend, and the zany bits that go totally wrong.

They rent a beautiful house, the Amazing Inn, on Vashon Island, Washington, and invite their closest friends: Min, Gunnar, Otto, Vernie and Nate, plus Min's girlfriend, to arrive on Friday evening and stay for the whole weekend until the wedding ceremony on Sunday afternoon.

Kevin and Russel have been living in LA for the past couple of years and they really miss their good friends who still all live in Seattle, for the most part. This weekend is all about reconnecting, but soon it becomes calamitous. Like the forecasted storm that's going to shove the ceremony from the epic deck overlooking the Puget Sound into the living area, or the dead orca that seems to take over the beach with its rotting stink, among other issues that nearly cause cool-headed Kevin to flip his wig.

See, Kevin has always been the grounding force in their relationship. Russel tends to get locked into his head, imagining a million worst-case scenarios, and this book flips that script. Kevin agonizes over each misadventure while Russel becomes the problem solver. And Gunnar. That certified genius expands his out-of-the-box strategy to save the day, literally, time and time again.

I felt like I was on a sun-dappled raft floating along a warm vista-filled river while reading this book. I was so engaged with Russel, and his determination to be positive and productive. His connection to all his friends, Min, Gunnar, Vernie and Otto particularly, was really special. He was in the zone, speaking to them from his heart, and learning about them and himself in the same moment. That's the cool thing about deep friendship, being able to reveal your insecurities and know that you'll be taken seriously. Russel had several "movie moments," as Vernie calls them, of connection in the course of the weekend. Except, not with Kevin.

Kevin is determined to make the right show of his wedding, to prove that he's serious about Russel, and his adult life, to all they've invited to assemble. Let's remember that both Kevin and Russel are 25 years old. This is their first super-serious relationship, and they both have a sense of needing to prove themselves. Each issue that erupts to derail Kevin's perfect wedding plans seems to also erode Kevin's confidence and makes him a bit prickly. Russel does his best to assuage these concerns, but he's still figuring life out, too. And his missteps make for delicious make-ups. Public (secluded) sex, anyone?

I'll be honest, when I read the blurb for this book—after reading the actual book—I felt wistful and

melancholy. I'm not ready to be done with Russel and Kevin. The Futon Years may be over, but I'm crossing my fingers for a Pacifier Years series where Russel has an unforeseen and equally dramatic change of heart and perhaps agrees to adopt some shrill and stinky youngins he cares for with his wide and deep love. A girl can dream.
