

THE RETURN

BRAD BONEY



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Music. Topher Manning rarely thinks about anything else, but his day job as a mechanic doesn't exactly mesh with his rock star ambitions. Unless he can find a way to unlock all the songs in his head, his band will soon be on the fast track to obscurity.

Then the South by Southwest music festival and a broken-down car drop New York critic Stanton Porter into his life. Stanton offers Topher a ticket to the Bruce Springsteen concert, where a hesitant kiss and phantom vibrations from Topher's cell phone kick off a love story that promises to transcend ordinary possibility.

The Return Details

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From Reader Review The Return for online ebook

Kaje Harper says

3.5 stars. This is the story of Topher, a young musician and mechanic, and Stanton, a 50-year-old music critic, who find themselves inexplicably drawn to one another. This is a solid read, and may be more of a hit with people who were deeply moved by and involved with the popular music included here, particularly of the 1980's. (I love music but, with some exceptions, these were not the songs I listened to a hundred times.) So take my opinions with that in mind.

I don't think it's necessary to have read the first book to read this one, but knowing the relationships between the recurring characters does add an extra dimension. I particularly enjoyed the glimpses of Travis here.

This book has two abiding themes. One is reincarnation, the other the popular music. Both are vital to enjoying the story, and I think in places the music supplies the emotion, so if it doesn't have that resonance for you, the story may feel flatter. Of the two main components, the music plays the bigger role. It is used as both plot and metaphor, and there are multiple discussions of the best Beatles tune, or the best ever Country and Western, where characters' choices are used to illuminate tastes and evoke character. Some take place in the 1980's flashbacks, others in present day. Even though the 80's were my college years, and despite recognizing all the songs, I didn't have the intimate experience of some of them to understand why those specific ones were brought up or contrasted. If you do, these scenes will no doubt mean more to you.

The MC's rise to fame is also in music, as part of an emerging rock band, with its success couched in terms of the music scene. I thought that part was well done and very believable. I liked the expertise that Stanton the experienced music critic gave to a young band trying to make it. I enjoyed the excitement of the guys, and the realism of the way a moment of exposure can snowball in today's online communities.

I did love Topher. He was to me the stand-out character in this story - talented, brash, confident, energetic and young. The scenes with him were fun to read, and I loved the way he bounced thoughts off other people, including his love interest, Stanton. I really enjoyed every conversation he was in.

Stanton was a flatter character, less emotional, although there were a few moments set in his past that did tug at the heart. Be prepared for the flashbacks, which tell of Stanton's first love. In my copy, at least, they were unheralded, so I spent a few pages of the first one trying to figure out why a fifty-year-old man, even a gorgeous one, was being called the hottest boy in the bar. The early flashbacks were less engaging than the later ones, although Hutch, Stanton's lost lover, was a strong character throughout. I also liked Marvin, Stanton's best friend, whose love of classical, and slightly outsider status, made him stand out in the flashback scenes.

(view spoiler)

As in The Nothingness of Ben, many of the conversations in this book felt very real - serious and funny by turns, with the kind of joking and teasing that happens between guys who are good friends. This is clearly a strength of the author's. The end wraps up all too neatly, with all problems solved for everyone. A sweet HEA for those who love them. This book has a lot of great reviews, and clearly resonated with many readers.

Amy says

This was not at all what I expected. Having previously read and enjoyed The Nothingness of Ben, I kind of expected something along those lines. I knew some of the characters from that story would make appearances in this one. I had no idea there was a paranormal aspect to it. I didn't like it as well as book #1.

Debra says

If the blurb on this book had explained a little more about the storyline, I might not have picked this up, but I'm glad I did. Having enjoyed The Nothingness of Ben and being a huge music and Springsteen fan, this was high on my list. It can be read as a standalone book, but I suggest reading Ben first as there are hints and threads in that book that are picked up and finished here.

It is hard to explain the storyline without giving away what is really going on, but if you really need to know what you are getting into (view spoiler). The bare bones of it is the story is told in alternating chapters between Stanton's current relationship with Topher and his relationship with Hutch in the early 1980's. Stanton is a music critic for NPR and he meets Topher, mechanic by day/musician by night, when his car breaks down in Austin during the SXSW Festival. As a thank you for a ride, Stanton takes Topher to the Springsteen concert and during Thunder Road, Topher has a strange experience and acts on the sudden urge to kiss Stanton, even though Topher is not gay. Add this to the phantom ringing of Topher's phone with no one there and the phone not responding, as well as Stanton's prior connection to the song, and we know something different is happening.

The story of Stanton and Hutch parallels Stanton and Topher's story. Integral to this is Stanton's best friend Marvin, the men they meet on Fire Island in the 80's, as well as Topher's bandmates and the Walsh family from The Nothingness of Ben. They are all connected in unexpected and extraordinary ways.

While the underlying theme is something I generally would not care to explore in a book (just a personal preference), the characters and writing really drew me in. This is a story of music, friendship, love and second chances. While the ending was almost fairytale happy, the book had me laughing and crying and as someone who remembers the 80's well and loves music I couldn't resist.

Mandapanda says

Complex and emotional story about a famous music critic, Stanton, who falls in love for the second time in his life with an aspiring musician, Topher. What they don't realise at first is that Topher has a inexplicable connection with Stanton's first love.

This story is more than an m/m romance. It easily comes under the banner of the Gay Fiction genre. The present day romance between Stanton and Topher alternates with the story of Stanton's relationship with his first love Hutch and its tragic end. It's also a story about friends. And Topher's bandmates and Stanton's circle of friends from the 80's play a huge part in the story.

I could feel the love of music on every page of this book. It permeates every part of the characters lives. It is the basis of so many of the stories they tell and the catalyst for the best and the worst things that happen to them. When Marvin and Topher were writing *Homesick* at the end I was so caught up in their creative process that I started thinking I would download the song before remembering - of course - that it doesn't really exist. All the songs they talk about (and there is a really wide range) made me feel so nostalgic.

The other big standout is the dialogue. The whole book is pretty much made up of great conversations between all of the players. I've always thought that realistic dialogue must be one of the hardest things for an author to accomplish but this is just pure gold. Funny, serious, intimate, blokey, and believably contemporary. I wanted to join in on the discussion.

It's also a big tearjerker in parts (the flashbacks are set in the 80's remember).

Reasons I didn't give it 5 stars? I've never been a fan of flashbacks so I did struggle a bit with them. Although that story did need to be told. I also thought the ending was all tied up too well. Every possible event or conversation was revisited and resolved at the end in an almost too unbelievable way. All the money being handed out in the end was unnecessary for example. And including Ben and Travis from *The Nothingness of Ben* in the whole (view spoiler) seemed like overkill.

Looking forward to more stories from this very interesting author.

Macky says

5 STARS JUST ISN'T ENOUGH!

I honestly don't know how to review this awesome book to give it the justice it deserves because truth be told it has me lost for words. I knew it was going to be very special from the moment I picked up my Kindle and started to read and I wasn't wrong but from the moment I finished it I've struggled with writing this review and I think its because any words I try to come up with to describe it just seem trite and cliched, plus let even just one spoiler out of the bag and you ruin its uniqueness. I can't say more than that.

Its a love story but not just any common or garden love story and the frustrating thing is that I can't think of any way of describing it without giving away the essence of what makes this such a magical experience. I think its one of those books that you just have to discover yourself. If you read *The Nothingness of Ben* then you'll know that Brad Boney has a very unique style and way of giving his characters great voices and If anyone can manage to take romantic fiction of any genre and give it a fresh and totally different feel, then its Brad Boney.

Topher and Stantons love story is the main romantic focus of the novel but there is also Chris (or Hutch as he's known) Marvin and eight other other men who I think you should have the pleasure of meeting yourselves and who, I would say, should be equally classed as main characters because they are just as significant to the story as the two budding lovers. Then past favourites Ben, Travis and the teens from TNOB are featured too, not just as window dressing but also to add even more depth and importance to the tale. In fact I would go as far as to say that really this story doesn't have 'supporting' characters because more or less every person in the book has a profound effect on how the story unfolds.

Told partly in present day and then in flashbacks from the 1980's (Warning... tissue moments!!) its the

unbelievably clever way that all these men's lives are connected and interwoven, that make this compelling, poignant story the stunner that it is and the way that its plotted is a work of pure genius. It sounds like it could all get a bit too complicated and perhaps in someone else's hands it would, but oh no, this runs as smooth as silk and never once did I find myself having to go back and recap because I'd lost the plot.

Then you get the music that runs throughout the book so vividly that you feel you're at each concert and can hear each song as its mentioned, especially if you're of an age to remember Bruce " The Boss " Springsteen and all the other classic anthems that are mentioned in the story and if you're not then I suggest you have You Tube at the ready to play alongside as you read. I'm a girl of the eighties so lots of things struck a chord with me and had me going back in time, perhaps that's why it resonated with me so much.

Other reviews have mentioned it but I must add that these guys talk **...A LOT** but those talks were some of my favourite parts of the book. Clever, witty and erudite those conversations show just how talented a writer Brad Boney is. Everytime these guys got together and ' chewed the fat ' or played their game I wanted in!

There are momentous issues brought up about what was happening in the eighties that I won't deny had me in tears and if you're an emotional magnet then I know you will be affected too, but somehow it isn't maudlin or gloomy or even overly angst even though the romance has its bumps both past and present , but once again I'm at a loss as to how to explain why without giving out major spoilers. It was just a wonderful piece of writing!

Not long ago another book did the same to me and up to now I would have said it was the best book I've read in 2013 and I've read some awesome books but now The Return is right up there with it. Will it affect you like it has me? I don't know ... but its getting some mighty fine reviews so all I can say is read it. Whatever happens you'll come away with a reading experience like you've never had before. I want to say I loved it .. but even that doesn't seem strong enough.

Thank you Brad Boney for touching me so deeply and for making me get so excited over a book again. Lets just say I absolutely **adored** it!

Isabel says

I honestly think that I don't have enough words to do justice to this book, or enough stars! It was one of the best books that I've read and I will definitely reread!

The story is captivating and I wanted to read it without any pause! I love the plot and the characters, I love Stanton's past, his friends, his lover! And I loved that this book walks around music! I love music, and some of the songs that are "played" are from a time that I wasn't even born, but I really love them! I discovered musics in this book that now I cannot stop hearing!

The alternation between the present days and the past, was very interesting to read! Stanton's meet Topher in the present, and he remembers his past with Chris!

In the beginning Stanton's flashbacks are amazing. His relationship with Chris was adorable and beautiful, but, when the book is reaching the end, they are not easy, and the last ones were very difficult to read! What happened to him, to Chris and their friends was very, very sad, and, somehow, it didn't seem fiction... Unfortunately, that's was a terrible reality back then! What Stanton went through because of prejudice and

intolerance, was so unfair and I felt that sorrow in me...

The present days were a light in the book! Topher is the light in Stanton's life! The age gap was nothing compared to the beautiful love that they shared! Topher tenacity to conquer Stanton's heart, and Stanton's need to fulfill Topher's dream, were enough to make me believe that they were meant to each other!

I cried with Stanton when Topher sang "Bridge Over Troubled Water" of Simon & Garfunkle! That was one of the best moments in this book for me! This music is beautiful and that moment so perfect!

I will never forget this book, the music, the "coincidences"... I will return to it!

I'm writing my review listening to "While My Guitar Gently Weeps" by Beatles, a music that I didn't knew and that this book gave to me...

"The Return" Playlist (Thank you Ingela!)

Rosalinda *KRASNORADA* says

[Hutch (hide spoiler)]

R * A Reader Obsessed * says

Note: Do not pass go, do not collect \$200. Read The Nothingness of Ben first! This isn't billed as a sequel or part of a series, but I don't see how this isn't a continuation from the first book. It's pretty much vital and necessary to read this in order!

4.5 Stars

I will be the first to admit that I was not impressed when I started this. I was a tad bored and impatient for things to pick up, and I'm not always in the mood for flashbacks, nor am I well versed in all things music which features heavily here. But as things progressed, it was like the sun slowly made its way through the clouds and everything became clear.

I don't want to spoil anything, but I went into this thinking it was simply just another romance with a chance to check in on the previous couple Ben and Travis, who I loved from The Nothingness of Ben. What I got instead was epic love. I'm not joking. EPIC. However, be prepared to also have an epic array of emotions that will confront you as you read this. There was disbelief and doubt. There was plenty of anxiety mixed with amazement, as reveal after reveal unfolded. Grief and frustration were ample, as well as joy. Simply put, I was in awe.

The road for Stanton and Topher was so far from easy and smooth. There were definitely some very

heartbreaking, tough moments and a few points of contention that made me flinch. Not everything made me happy but the take home message was again, perspective - to not doubt the good things that come one's way is an essential theme throughout this series so far; that having faith ends up transcending logical thought but makes it so worth while.

Pretty much all the stars go to Brad Boney as he continues to impress with complex storytelling of loss and love. With each revelation my heart swooned more and more. I advise the reader to really just sit back and enjoy the ride as much as possible. This isn't perfect by any means but I know it will leave you with lots of feels - probably both good and bad. However, that's the point, right? To feel?? Overall - just wow.

BR with Meags - so thankful there was someone to experience this crazy story with!

Gina says

OMG OMG OMG OMG OMG!! TOTALLY AWESOME BOOK!!

I read one review before reading this book, a review from someone I knew would not give away any of the story. And I am so glad I did, not knowing what was going to happen certainly enhanced my enjoyment. I have been reading cute, light, fluffy stuff, recently and wanted something that would move me emotionally while still being entertaining. I wanted to laugh and cry, and OMG did this book fulfill that need.

This story goes from present day to the past (1980's). In the present you meet a group of young men who are struggling to make it in the music industry. These young men have been friends since childhood and have a special closeness. When the lead singer Topher, meets an attractive older man who happens to be a music critic (Stanton), his world takes a drastic turn. As these two get to know each other you learn about Stanton's life and journey, and you are propelled into the 1980's and relive it with him. So goes the back and forth, from past to present in this book and I never once found it distracting or irritating. In the 80's you meet Stanton and the group of friends he met one summer and his relationship with Hutch. Honestly, at times I didn't know where I wanted to be, in the present or the past.

This book was heartbreakingly at times, heartwarming a lot of the time, funny, maddening, it pulled me in and never let me go. The flow for me made sense and the writing superb. I spent one entire day just reading this book, mesmerized by its story. I skipped lunch, never got out of my PJ's, I simply could not be parted from this book.

What the core of this story is a growing relationship between a younger and older man, can they overcome the hurdles. But it is also a story about connection, friendship, trust, loyalty and laughter. I don't want to spoil this book for anyone so I am not going to say more. What I will say is I loved so much about this book, I love the friendships, the banter between each group of friends (I so wanted to play that game with them), the love between these friends was just as heartwarming for me as the growing love between Topher and Stanton.

At the end of this story I was happy, sad, moved, absolutely wrecked. I laid in my bed thinking, wishing, hoping. The story running in my head not leaving me to sleep. This book will stay with me for a long time. Superb!

Someone pass me some tissues!!

Ingie says

Written May 20, 2014

5 Huge Stars - I'm completely overwhelmed, amazingly "OMG" good

This book was a time on my TBR shelf "*loved by all my friends*" - and a lot of them (Gina, Isabel and Macky for example) recommended me to read it (see Gina's lovely review). ~ I really enjoyed the first book in this series as well, *The Nothingness of Ben* (3.8 stars).

The Return is partly about great music from the nice old 80:s, sorry to say, but it was my "time" and my youth. It is also about love, grand huge but not easy love.

And OMG, OMG, OMG (as Gina usually says when she loves something...) ~ I just finished my listening to an FANTASTIC novel. So, so very good!

***The Return* is just an grand undescribable fantastic romantic tale.** A novel about music, to meet the one you always loved once again and much much more.

‘The German philosopher *Nietzsche*:
“Without music, life would be a mistake.”’

So so well done. Big round of applause to Brad Boney. ~ Nothing like anything I ever read. ~ ...and the audiobook version, narrated by Charlie David, is highly recommended.

This amazing "tale" begin (not the book) with **Stanton (aka the cute pet name Starsky)**, a young music student and his huge love-of-his-life, (want-to-be-a-pro-singer) **Hutch** (.later called by his birthname Chris). (Not a story spoiler) (view spoiler)

‘Stanton pulled back and smiled. “Did you know musicians and mechanics are my two weaknesses?”’

Stanton and Hutch are both living in the summer paradise *Long Island*, and in the winters in New York City, in the beggining of the old 1980:s. There are also Stanton's best friend *Marvin* and Chris' three roommate besties; *Robert, Michael and Paul*. This is a bunch of happy irresponsible youths (all six gay guys - more or less open and out). Music, rock, pop etc is one big stuff in their lifes and the great NJ-star *Boss Bruce* is (...needless to say Mo!) a huge favorit.

The 80:s was a pretty wild time with lots of parties, steamy lovemaking, music and life talking, smart bantering and they all just have this kind of a great youth-time (view spoiler). ~ Then it happens...the horrible new dark time is there.

In parallel, we are in a modern-day *Austin Texas* and the story is now told by **Topher, a 27 year old auto mechanic** (friend of the guys in the book # 1) who by chance meet the very famous music critic Stanton Porter and may accompany him to an evening at a Bruce Springsteen concert. Topher is so lucky that he gets the chance and though Stanton is almost an "old" fifty-year old "snufkin" becomes these two men at once good friends. Odd things happens, the attraction grows fast and a spiral of events kicks off.

Topher is the lead singer of a local unknown rock band. He, along with his three childhood friends *Robin, Maurice (twins) and Peter*, makes smaller local gigs with their own-written material. They are all three straight guys who are waiting for the big breakthrough. Maybe they will be future rock-stars whit *Dime Box*. ~ And one night is "Big Music-Stanton" there and listening at one of theirs gigs...

Yes, the total bottom line, this was a brief description of the background of an epic romance in two different time periods. If you haven't already read the book; just run, fly, crawl or jump and hurry up to download it. You will hardly regret that (single!?) impulse click-decision. I, for sure, didn't in any case. ...on the contrary.

Instead of another way to long review - Four simple important statements

#1 - This is a book to read for every sentimental music lover over 40 who still remember the 1980:s. Check the playlist.

#2 - The narration by Charlie David must be an great example for all audiobook narrators. Perfect voice and feel for this story and (all) the adorable characters.

#3 - This is what I call epic. Magnificently with just some small words. My heart swelled, I cried, laughed and enjoyed.

#4 - This book is an obvious must-read for everyone who knows love is forever and adore "guys who loves guys" romances.

Why chew more?

I loved the romantic parts, the main characters, all these wonderful friends, the fun and lively, the sad and terrible, the sexy love acts and an perfect incredible resolution. ~ And of course also **this author's wonderful ability to tell a clever story with twisted turns**. He know how to write thoughtful stories, I will certainly continue reading his future books (see below about the next book in this series).

Last but not unimportant; the outstanding music.
Just read it. Please!!!

I LIKE - pretty much...NO...I LiKE enormously

~~~~~

# They where needless to say "Boss" lovers. ~ The author Brad Boney's playlist: YouTube Playlist for The Return.

# It will be a third book The Eskimo Slugger in this "series", see [bradboney.com](http://bradboney.com).

# I got both the Audible audiobook and the Kindle ebook for \$10 at Amazon.com. A quite okay price.

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**Heather C says**

**"Without music, life would be a mistake." ~ Friedrich Nietzsche**

*The Return* brings us the journeys of Topher Manning, a 26 year old mechanic and aspiring musician living in Austin, Texas, and Stanton Porter, a 50 year old widely-known music critic for National Public Radio from New York. Stanton is in Austin for the annual South by Southwest festival and finds himself in a time crunch when his borrowed car breaks down across the street from where Topher works. Topher offers to help him out, and the two immediately connect over their mutual adoration of Bruce Springsteen and all things music. An unexpected kiss kicks off an impossible romance that opens up 'gay-for-you' possibilities, controversial age differences, and the fact that the two men have roots set in entirely different parts of the country. Can Topher and Stanton overcome all these obstacles and find their happy-ever-after?

**I am absolutely in love with this book!** And the cover! I have been impatiently awaiting this book ever since I read *The Nothingness of Ben* last November and I just couldn't believe it when I *finally* had it on my Kindle.

I will not go into all the details of the plot and rehash the storyline...I kinda want to keep those things close to my chest so I don't spoiler all the good stuff. So, instead, I will point out a few things that made this book so great for me:

**The Characters:** You may remember that Topher was briefly introduced in *The Nothingness of Ben* as a coworker of Travis. This book really CANNOT be read as a stand-alone even though Travis and Stanton had no role in TNoB. All the Walsh boys, and many key events that took place in TNoB, were crucial here in *The Return*. Also, I've never been a huge fan of May/December romances, but, I never really felt the age gap between Topher and Stanton, because the two were so compatible...it was like they were destined for each other. Plus, there is just something about Brad's writing that makes it so easy to care about his characters, and not just the MCs...I'm talking about ALL the secondary characters too; very character focused and driven.

**The Music:** Much of this story was told through music. I'm a little embarrassed to admit that I have very limited knowledge about "The Boss," and the majority of the music discussions went right over my head. But, I can honestly say that I appreciate how the author took the meaning of the music and intertwined it with

the characters' lives. It gave important moments of the story so much more depth and meaning, and actually added to my enjoyment.

**The Present and the Past Storylines:** The story alternated between Topher's POV in present day, and Stanton's POV back in the early '80s. After some initial disorientation with the blast to the past, I didn't even notice it anymore and became totally immersed in the flow of the story. I wouldn't classify this as flashbacks because it felt like two interwoven storylines being told at the same time that were equally important and related. This story wouldn't have worked any other way, and Brad has executed it seamlessly.

**The Dialogue:** Just like in TNoB, there was A LOT of talkin' in this book! The characters talk talk talk leaving no time for the reader to ever get hung up on internal monologues and scenery descriptions. Makes for a fast reading book IMO.

**The Atmosphere:** The story is set primarily between three different locales: Austin, Fire Island, and New York. And the vivid and vibrant way Brad portrays them left me feeling like I had experienced a little piece of the culture without ever having traveled there before. I also got the feeling that these places are very meaningful to the author.

In summary, I loved everything about this book! And I doubt my words have even come close to doing it justice. If you loved Ben and Travis, I definitely think you will be able to find a place in your heart for Topher and Stanton. True, this story is a bit different, but I promise you all of the charm is still there. I stayed up into the wee hours of the morning finishing it, leaving myself with a nasty book-hangover to suffer through the next day.

So, here I am again, impatiently waiting for another 'Brad Boney' experience...

Highly recommended.

**Reviewed for The Blog of Sid Love**

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**Jennifer?Pher? says**

I don't really know what to say? I think first I will state that this is a really great book. A great follow up to The Nothingness of Ben. Involving all the *many* characters from that book and intertwining them with the new characters in this book. (can someone draw me up a family/friend tree??) It is very well written. It was like reading two different stories at the same time with the memories; two stories that were both done very well. Seriously, sometimes the back and forth can be annoying but in this case the author managed to really capture both past and present and, well, make me feel like I was reading two stories that would somehow be combined at the end. I think the problem, for me though was that these two stories that were well written just made me sad. Instead of running toward the HEA I felt like I was walking through mud. I know what I was supposed to get from this story but I didn't and really, at some point knew I couldn't. I truly, page after page, felt like I was reaching for it, I just never was able to grab it. Honestly, I didn't *want* it. There was so much about this that I personally didn't like that no matter the outcome I knew I wouldn't end up happy.

**This is how I feel PERSONALLY.** My personal feelings that have nothing to do with how good the book actually is.

I wonder still if maybe this was just one story with randomly sprinkled memories instead of two full on stories if I would have felt differently? So, two well written stories intertwining into one was a blessing and a curse I think. Getting so much history hurt the present story for me. Because of it I didn't believe in the story that was taking place in the now. Where I felt the connection between Stanton and Chris I never felt it between Stanton and Topher and I honestly think it was *because of* the story of Stanton and Chris. Had there just been revelations, similarities and coincidences with a brief explanation as to why I think I would have felt more comfortable. I absolutely hated, hated, HATED (view spoiler) I was utterly disgusted by this moment in the story that I just wanted to give up. It took one of the stories and totally ruined it. The timing just f'n sucked and I was very angry. I feel it was unnecessary and added nothing to the story taking place now. It just seriously tainted a character that didn't need that to happen to him. His story was sad enough.

At this point I knew I was losing the race and just felt like throwing in the towel. I didn't. I kept going and kept hoping that something was going to change my thinking but it just didn't happen. Add to that the amazing things that happen at the end to everyone and I was just like ok, too much, on to the next one.

Anyway...I read as an escape. I have read my share of emotionally charged books and know they aren't really my thing, this just wasn't my thing. Add to that my love of reading because what I am reading isn't real and well, this dealt with such real issues that I felt like running the other way. The past hurt. The real issues and loss just about wrecked me. The beauty I was supposed to see for the future, the romance the love and the good just got so overshadowed by the past that I was unable to see through the dark to what I am sure was supposed to be an uplifting and beautiful HEA.

Don't forget, this is my personal take on a well written book and not in any way at all meant to offend the author or other readers. Not every book will be loved and not every book is for me or you.

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### **DarienMoya says**

#### **4.5**

Waaaaaa, this book! Its left me wrecked. I think I'm gonna need at least 2weeks to get myself in order. Brad Boney man, that man has too many words.

The Return, is heartbreaking, beautiful, inspiring, magical, and gut wrenching. I cried all the tears and it hit me on a personal level.

Personal Story:

**I was a very sick kid in Jamaica where I was born. I spent a lot time in the hospital and I use to joke about how I was heading home. It can be quite lonely in the hospital during the days, away from your family and friends. I would look out the windows into the garden everyday, too weak to do much but sit up. Across the way there use to be a thin boy (a little older than my 10yrs) sitting in a wheelchair. I dragged myself out there one day, pulling on my IV drip, weak but determined to go sit with him. I made it and we became friends of sorts for the many weeks I was admitted. My details are fuzzy but I can remember clearly one time touching him and nurse running up and telling me not do that because**

**he had AIDS. At the time had no clue what that even was until I asked my mom what it was, and all she said it was a disease and it kills you. I cried so much because I was going to lose my friend. He never said much to me, he would smile and listen to my chatter and complaints and I always touched him regardless of what anyone would say.**

**Long story short I got better and was released from the hospital. I told him I would see him again because I always comeback. My young naive mind couldn't grasp the concept that maybe I never would. I did get sick again, like I always did back then and returned to hospital. Knowing that I would look out the window and see him in the morning, but morning came and there was no nurse pushing him out in the garden and in his wheelchair. I was told that he had died and my heart broke because I never got to say goodbye. In all the weeks I was at the hospital I never saw anyone visited him and I like to think that I made him happy if only for a moment. I don't think I ever knew his name, but twenty two years later I still remember him. How he got sick I'll never know, but I remember his smile.**

This book brought up all these emotions for me and left me a blubbering mess. Like Stanton I never got to say goodbye and it stays with you for a long time. I really enjoyed reading this book!!

**SideNote:** Don't let me being all morose put you off from reading the book. It's beautiful shit man and you should check it out. Just make sure to start with *The Nothingness of Ben*

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**~◊~Doxni(ela) ♥ ?? love & semi-colons~◊~ says**

### **3.5 stars**

~~Buddy read with my Canadian soulmate Catherine~~

I have such mixed feelings about this book. Jen's review sums up my emotional state while reading *The Return* perfectly.

Stanton and Hatch's story deteriorated into such despair, I couldn't get into Stanton and Topher's story or feel truly happy for them.

The present-day romance was meant to be a second chance at love for both Stanton and Topher, a do-over of sorts, but I was so lost in the sadness and anticipation of tragedy in the 1980s plot thread, I felt discombobulated and distraught the entire time, even while in the present with Topher and Stanton.

I didn't mind the paranormal elements. As an agnostic, I'm open to interpretations of the afterlife and find them fascinating.

I did think the final phone call Stanton received from Topher's phone was too literal to be believable, and I didn't buy into Hatch's dad's change of heart.

I think both stories got a bit muddled with undue details about music and long conversations about nothing at all. But the writing was evocative, and I loved seeing Travis and Ben again and exploring the connections between the various characters.

WARNING: BIG SPOILER IN THE TAGS BELOW

(view spoiler)

**There is a certain beauty to this story, a sense of coming full circle.**

I dare you to listen to Springsteen's "Thunder Road" while or after reading and not cry.

*We got one last chance to make it real  
To trade in these wings on some wheels  
Climb in back  
Heaven's waiting on down the tracks  
Oh, oh, come take my hand  
We're riding out tonight to case the promised land  
Oh, oh, Thunder Road, oh, Thunder Road  
Lying out there like a killer in the sun  
Hey I know it's late we can make it if we run  
Oh, Thunder Road, sit tight take hold  
Thunder Road*

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**Riley Hart says**

Holy crap. I don't even know where to start when it comes to this books. I was a blubbering mess last night while reading. I didn't know how to feel. Part of me was devastated...heartbroken, so sad for the things that were missed out on and the path of a group of people's lives... but at the same time, I was happy. It was filled with hope and beauty. Second chances and love. I don't even know how to explain it except for saying it was intense. Loved, loved, loved it. Brad Boney is awesome.

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