



The Nothingness of Ben

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Ben Walsh is well on his way to becoming one of Manhattan's top litigators, with a gorgeous boyfriend and friends on the A-list. His life is perfect until he gets a phone call that brings it all crashing down: a car accident takes his parents, and now he must return to Austin to raise three teenage brothers he barely knows.

During the funeral, Ben meets Travis Atwood, the redneck neighbor with a huge heart. Their relationship initially runs hot and cold, from contentious to flirtatious, but when the weight of responsibility starts wearing on Ben, he turns to Travis, and the pressure shapes their friendship into something that feels a lot like love. Ben thinks he's found a way to have his old life, his new life, and Travis too, but love isn't always easy. Will he learn to recognize that sometimes the worst thing imaginable can lead him to the place he was meant to be?

The Nothingness of Ben Details

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From Reader Review The Nothingness of Ben for online ebook

Ery says

The Nothingness of Ben was a decent story about a successful lawyer from New York City who comes home to take care of his three brothers after his parents death. Ben, significantly older than his siblings, struggles to connect with them and learn how to be a guardian all while readjusting to life in Texas. He struggles with his old relationships, friends and the man he was dating, while discovering a new life in Texas.

Overall it's a sweet story with some trials and tribulations. The author at times acknowledges common romance tropes included within his own story. Some parts were goofy and difficult to identify with, but some parts were very poignant and sweet.

There were also several parts that didn't work very well for me. I don't want to nitpick them so I will just provide the two areas in which I thought there could be improvement.

1). Personally, I am a sucker for emotional depth and characterization. While the author writes fairly realistic characters, I was unable to live in their skin and I really searched for a deeper emotional connection that never really came to fruition.

2) The dialogue between the characters, while often humorous and very realistic, frequently laughed romance. I struggle with this one, as it provided the author with a unique voice that isn't often seen similar stories. However the word choices sometimes diminished the emotional connection between the characters and pulled me out of the story.

All in all, it's a solid effort for a first book. I will likely read future works from this author and I am looking forward to see him grow.

R * A Reader Obsessed * says

Comfort BR with Meags!

4.5 Stars

I don't know if I'm on the rebound from my most recent let down of a read, but I don't care. I pretty much loved this book.

Sure there were some things that niggled or bothered me, but overall this was a great story about family and love.

What stands out for me the most was the dialogue.

The banter

The quick wit

The flirting

The arguing

And I'm not necessarily just talking about the push/pull of the MC's. Everyone had their piece to say on a

variety of topics and it was all done so very smartly.

Loved, loved, loved Travis - he's straightforward, perceptive, sensitive, and brave. I was continually impressed just like Ben, as the layers were peeled away revealing quite the package. I don't blame Ben one bit for falling hard.

I could also say that Ben too, has layers. Assertive, conceited, bossy, a little bit kinky - he's got a lot to learn about his brothers and himself. He pissed me off a couple of times for sure, but he comes around beautifully.

This pretty much had it all - apt poignancy, deft humor, emotional angst. Brad Boney has a way with words showing off some great philosophical revelations about living life and appreciating what you've got. Everything's about perspective - the rest will simply take care of itself.

MsMiz (Tina) says

Oh this book...this book. I am not good with reviews and since I am still wiping the tears from Quentin's Thanksgiving day toast, this is going to be disjointed and incoherent.

Nikyta said yesterday 'read this'. I was thinking sure sure, whatever.....she was right. The story opens with Ben, a big hot shot New York lawyer with very well connected friends and what happens when tragedy strikes his family back in Austin, Texas. We are then treated to a one year journey of 4 brothers and a cast of secondary characters who help shape and define their new world. At times you will want to punch Ben, I mean he is a dick for most of the book - he is self centered and completely submerged in 'The Ben Show'. But that is what is fabulous about his character, when he gets it, he gets it big and the impact is like an atomic bomb going off. Man for such a smart person, he is so lost for most of the story. Quentin, the next brother, is acerbic and too old for his 17 years - he sees it all. Jason, the next youngest brother, is sweet and loving and too quiet. Cade, is different from them all - young, sports crazy and emotional. Travis - oh Travis, I so love you - is the straight love interest across the street. Again, we have so many solid great 'people' in this book.

The writing is smart, crisp and has a fantastic sarcastic bent to it that warms my heart! At times things are too idyllic and 'easy' such as the open discussion of sex with the teens and their parents, but it works with these characters and you know that you actually want these types of interactions to happen in real life - the connection and community that this book reminds me of is such a standard to live by!

This is a dialog heavy book, which is right up my alley. It is very character driven, again, right in my sweet spot. There is nothing that I did not like about this book. For those who like pop culture references, this book is full of them - reminded me a bit of John Goode in that respect. So if you like references from The Sting to the O.C and Dawson's Creek, grab on and take the ride.

I am going to follow N and make Cole and LA read it so this book can get some really good reviews!! hee

.Lili. says

This book has been around the block for a while so I won't go into a long drawn out review but I will say this book is-

Amazing chemistry between the two main characters ✓

Humor ✓

Great dialogue ✓

Steam ✓

Angst ✓

Great cast of secondary characters ✓

And at the end you'll be left with a smile! 5 Stars! Even though this book wasn't published this year- it's still going on my Best of 2014 List. Do yourself a favor and-

Candice says

This book for me was absolutely wonderful. I started reading it and as much as I didn't want to stop I did because I didn't want to rush through it in order to get to the end. This story was about a journey, not only for Ben and his brothers, but also for the people who were in their lives. A journey that started with such a tragedy and through a lot of trial and error ended up in a place where everything was meant to be. Even though this story starts with a tragic event, there is really very little angst. The story just flows so naturally that I ended up caught up in this story and their lives that I didn't want it to end. I will definitely look for more books by this author in the future.

Ami says

I guess this is where Tina will say to me, "*see, I told you so*" :)

Truthfully, it wasn't a smooth read all the way. I did put it down twice, marked it as "postponed-for-now" book. I wasn't in the right mood; was immersing with some paranormal/urban fantasy books, that reading something simply contemporary wasn't going to do it. But after few titles failed to keep my interest, I decided to go back.

... and boy, did I enjoy this so much. Gobbling it up as my morning read; finished it at 5 AM.

Let me tell you what made it work for me, personally:

+ The characters grew throughout the book -- this is what I enjoy so much from a story. The characters that I meet in the beginning are not 'the same' when I get to the finish line. There's a journey that they go through, that make them learn about their mistakes along the way.

Ben might be selfish in the beginning and he didn't always made the right decision (I was so pissed at him during the first New York visit) but he learned what he did wrong and he made it right. Travis had inferiority complex; he wasn't this sophisticated city boy, but he was willing to learn and opened himself to experience, and he succeeded in the end. The brothers also have their own character developments. I LOVED IT!

+ The lack of angst or depression -- yes, the story might started with death of parents. But the whole book was on the light side. It was good, really good. Plus I enjoyed the "dialog" style. Yep, this book was heavy on dialogs, and it fit me just right. I love movies that "talk" (Woody Allen-style) and the same goes with books.

+ The down-to-earth setting -- there was one full scene that was a bit "*out there*"; with Ben talking to his dead Dad, when he was down with fever (KATE, consider THIS a warning!) ... but in overall, everything seemed realistic for me. Even how Ben approached parenting, how he helped Jason setting down his first date ... it wasn't over-the-top. Me Likey :)

Random Thoughts -- which only make sense to those who have read it. But who cares, it's MY review, I can write anything I want:

+ No personal pet peeves (THANK YOU!)

+ There's more to Julie (Ben's aunt) than meet the eyes -- I liked that.

+ Stupid advice from Dan (Jason's boyfriend's father) is actually endearing *lol*

+ Well-rounded secondary characters

+ Ben and Travis both ended their relationship before they got together -- so no cheating involved.

+ The sex is kinda kinky, but cool :)

+ Eight seconds, huh?

+ I guess the Earth is flat after all *lol*

+ Napkins drawing? Who-da-thought

+ Travis said that he loved it that Joey chose Pacey. A man after my own heart

+ Lots of popular culture thrown in; I liked that.

+ I don't know James Joyce or ever read it. Hey, I'm not "Foreign-Lit" educated, okay? I'm Indonesian, please remember that *grin*

+ One of these days, I really need to watch *The Sting*

+ I cried over Quentin's speech. I'm sappy that way.

+ Another teary eyed over "Travis Walsh" conversation. Again, I'm sappy *shrugs*

Guess I will be waiting for Mr. Boney's next book after all :)

Heather C says

Don't let the blurb scare you!!

Because when I first skimmed it, I was foreseeing something horribly sad and depressing. Okay, I admit it was sad, but there was also a lot of humor and happiness and very little angst. I swear...I only cried *once*.

This was a wonderful heart warming story about Ben, a 27 year old big shot NYC attorney, and how he struggles to find his "forward momentum" following the tragic deaths of both his parents. Ben is suddenly thrust into the role of guardian over his 3 teenage brothers back home in Austin, Texas...where people really do say "y'all". The problem is, Ben already has a full, busy life back in New York. And thats enough plot review from me!

Some of the things that make this a great story:

The Characters: I have to say that the characters are really what hooked me into this story; well developed and demensional. And not just Ben and Travis (the MCs) but also all the secondary characters: Quentin, Jason and Cade (the brothers) and Colin (Ben's BFF) and David (Ben's BF); etc. **Ben** was a bit of a selfish asshole but he did grow on me and redeemed himself in the end. He did, of course, make a lot of mistakes along the way. **Travis**, what can I say about Travis? Well, he's the complete opposite of Ben. He is compassionate and lovable and wears his emotions all over his face.

The Realism: I thought that how Ben reacted to and handled the dilemmas and decision making seemed very realistic. I'm not very sure about how realistic the GFY aspects of the story were, but yeah, I bought it. But I'm always a sucker for a good GFY story.

The Dialogue: Ben spoke like the educated guy he was. The boys sounded like teenagers. And Travis...well he kinda talked like me! Ugh! You just can't bring the country out of some folks. Doesn't mean they don't know shit, though! There was a lot of talkin' in this book.

The Kinkiness: Ben turned out to be toppy freak and Travis was a total bottom! "The earth is flat" scene was easlily my favorite, though.

The Thanksgiving Day Speech: I started crying before Q even started speaking...and I'm not *even* a big crier! So if you are...then you've been warned.

I am impatiently waiting for the next book by Brad...which I hear will be Topher's!

Ingie says

3,8 Stars - a super cute family story about brotherhood, grief and to find the one and only

Maybe not epic and unforgettable but not trivial and fast forgotten. Good topic, well written and charmingly enjoyable to read.

~~~~~

‘Sometimes being a brother is even better than being a superhero’

...a fitting quote written by the author Marc Brown and mentioned in this story

~\*~\*~\*~\*~\*~\*~\*~\*~\*~\*~\*~\*~\*~\*~\*~\*~\*~\*~\*

**Very, very fitting, because** *The Nothingness of Ben* is a very nice and emotional story about a older brother (**Ben Walsh**) who must leave his exciting party life as a hotshot lawyer in *New York* for his three younger teenage brothers (Quentin 16, Jason 14 and Cade 12), at home in *Austin Texas*, after a terrible sad accident. It storms, cracks and is not all that easy to always succeed on the first try, but Ben finds both back to his family, creating a new and meets a gorgeous red-haired man (Travis).

**If you only have a little patience** and indulgence that maybe this is a "good luck to everybody" (...Tom, Dick and Harry etc) story and slightly too cozy at times - is this a lovely feelgood novel. You'll shed a tear, you might be surprised at the turns (I was) and also get the pleasure of getting a little annoyed at the main character a few times.

...But even a slightly egocentric career guy from the big city can be a super brother. ...and a *superlover*.

**In my opinion; really good dialogue,** believable characters and some amusing steam. I enjoyed, smiled and was satisfied.

**I LIKE** - a great "feelgood" for rainy autumn days.

~~~~~

Big thanks to Marc who recommended me this sweet M/M romance.

Mirjana **DTR - Down to Read says**

****1/6/17 - Re-read via Audiobook. I LOVED this book the first time I read it! Figured it was time to revisit.**

*****5 Muddy Waters Stars*****

"We can believe in the nothingness of life, we can believe in the nothingness of death and of life after death - but who can believe in the nothingness of Ben?"

This book is everything that I love about reading. I went through every emotion possible and loved every second of it!

Ben Walsh was born in Austin, Texas but as quickly as his shoes could take him, he moved to NY and away from his family. Not because he didn't love them, but because he dreamed of bigger and better. He went to Columbia Law School, found a best friend from one of the richest families on the east coast (don't let that description fool you, I adored Colin!) and proceeded to graduate top of his class becoming a successful litigator in one of NY's most prestigious law firms. His new fabulous life unfortunately didn't have room for his down-home, Texas family. He visits once a year for the holidays and that's about as much contact as he has.

Unfortunately, life has other plans for Ben. A heartbreaking phone call delivering tragic news that his parents died in a car accident changes the course of Ben's life forever.

Twenty-seven years old, both parents dead and the guardian of his three teenage brothers is not the life Ben signed up for. At the funeral he meets Travis, boy next door (ok, across the street), friend to his brothers and hunky (straight) grease monkey. They instantly bond. Travis has had a less than idyllic life and can sympathize for Ben, so he offers to help Ben navigate the uneasiness of accepting his new reality.

What starts off as friendship quickly blooms into affection and genuine feelings. Can Ben maneuver through the muddy waters of adjusting to a whole new role and possible new relationship? Can he find a way to re-establish a connection and relationship with his brothers? Can he find a way to move forward when he feels like his life is now stuck in perpetual limbo?

"Something my dad used to say. When everything is confusing and murky, he told us to treat it like muddy water. Stop. Sit still. Let the dirt settle and eventually the water will clear up."

First and foremost let me say that Brad Boney's writing style was a breath of fresh air. It did take me a little bit to adjust, but I absolutely loved his dialogue-based storytelling. His background in theater shines on every page and allows the reader to feel like they are right there in the moment with the characters. The writing style is a unique aspect of this book.

Ben is a flawed character, but you can't help but root for him. He's had the weight of the world put on his shoulders and all his past regrets and mistakes are flying at him at high speed. Each of the boys was a perfect counter-balance to Ben. Quentin (16) was the observant, old soul to Ben's selfish and stubborn ways. Jason

(14) was the sensitive boy to Ben's thick-skinned attitude. And Cade (12) was the carefree believer to Ben's over-thinking, analytical brain.

And Travis...oh Travis.

"When Quentin, Jason and Cade looked at Travis, they saw a constant, a through line, but when Ben looked at Travis, he saw a goddamned hero."

He was just a good ol' boy who worked hard and loved just as hard. He may have been confused at first by his newfound feelings toward Ben, but when he commits to something, he sure does follow through and gives it his all...with gusto! And let me tell you, that gusto was very hot (even with Ben's interesting little fetish). On top of that, his Texas twang, matter of fact rationalization and fantastic sayings had me cracking up and hugging my kindle at the same time.

"Who cares if I'm gay or not? I spent the last month thinking about nothing but you, so right now I'm feeling pretty gay. And I reckon I'm doing just fine."

"You can put boots in the oven, but that don't make 'em biscuits."

The cast of supporting characters is absolutely fantastic! Every person has a role to play and a reason why they either are in Ben's life or come into it. And I must give props to Brad Boney for not making the well-to-do Mead family stereotypical rich snobs. They were as down to earth as anyone else. The only thing inflated about this family was their bank account.

I could probably go on gushing about this book for paragraphs on end. Every moment and emotion felt just as it should be. Nothing forced or exaggerated, just an authentic portrait of one family's path in life. I loved every minute of reading about these boys and being on Ben's journey. He learned about family, friendship and love all from one of the worst moments of his life.

"Because sometimes, and this is really important, the worst possible thing imaginable leads you to the place you were meant to be all along. Even in the most dire of times, life gives you a reason to give thanks."

***J* Too Many Books Too Little Time says**

4.5--**This Was a Good One Y'all**--Stars!!!

Loved the writing....

Loved the banter....

Loved Tyler....

Loved Ben 90% of the time....there was just that one time. You know the one, in NY with David in the bathroom.

Loved the brothers....they were

I even loved Colin....

Could of done without Ben's little fetish....

And I could of done with more bossy Ben....

All in all it was virtually....

Kaje Harper says

This book has some of the best conversations I've read in M/M. Perhaps because of the author's theater background, there is a naturalness and a rhythm that is very comfortable to read and makes the characters come alive. The teens, particularly the oldest brother, Quentin, are a bit precocious, but the author manages

to bring it off and the interactions of Ben with his brothers are definitely a highlight of the book.

There is a middle section where I wish the author would have spent a bit more time, and given us more actual scenes to watch the four brothers adjusting to their new life and working things out. There's sometimes a reluctance to make books too long, but some more of those great conversations would have highlighted that stretch of what-comes-next. I would have welcomed the extra time on-page with these characters.

The ending is a nice touch of clueless angst and sweet. This is a book I will reread, to spend a bit more time listening to Ben and Travis hanging out and talking. Definitely an author to watch.

Gigi says

I absolutely adored this book. It is a 5 star read, no doubt about it. But after mulling it over, trying to decide how to review it and what exactly I want to say about it, I have come to the conclusion that while I loved the book, I just am not able to give MC Ben my stamp of approval. Thinking back to my other reviews, that would normally cause me to rate a book lower, but with how much I liked this book, I couldn't do that.

So, great book, heartbreaking story, loved MC Travis and the supporting characters to bits and pieces, but MC Ben left me cold and was never able to redeem himself in my eyes. YMMV!

Heller says

Well. This was absolutely lovely.

Ben is an up and coming lawyer in NYC transplanted from Texas. He has a great job, a shiny new boyfriend and endless prospects. This all ends with a phone call telling him that his parents have died in a car accident as his three younger brothers need him at home.

Honestly when this book starts out Ben is a not the best of men. He's selfish and he's a dick in more ways than one. He does go home and he does attempt to be a brother to his brothers he left behind and be a better man. He also meets the guy across the street, Travis, a mechanic who has been a good friend to his family.

I love the rebuilding of the brothers' relationships. I loved this book for that alone. It was so real, so rich and layered, I couldn't get enough of it. I'd say read this book for those boys and that man who gradually reconnect with each other. Gorgeous.

About Travis and Ben. Wow. Far from being in the shadow of the brothers' story this romance is strong and just as compelling. Incendiary chemistry with hot sex scenes and incredibly emotional exchanges. Really wonderful romance here.

Fantastic story and highly recommended.

Vivian says

I liked how this was woven. The story in this romance was in many ways better than the romance itself which is a pretty darn good friends to lovers story. I'm not usually a fan of stories based around kids either, but kinda hard not to love the Walsh clan. Truth is the story is all about Ben. His choices make all the difference in 4 lives: his 3 younger brothers and Travis.

The strength of this story was the characterization. Boney nailed making each one individual and interesting enough to want to follow in the story. Could have been a kaleidoscope of people wandering in and out, but it wasn't. Even tertiary characters get rounding out. Nice.

Besides, I'm a ridiculous romantic so when this made the final turn I just breathed a deep stuttered sigh.

Favorite quote:

“Is the possibility of eight seconds of glory worth the risk of getting thrown off the bull?”

Lena♥Ribka says

Rounded up to 3 stars

It was not bad, and I can understand why so many readers like this book.

Or better to say, I try at least to understand WHY. It's a very CONVENTIONAL MM-ROMANCE with a typical HEA. I don't belong to the target audience for such kind of stories, but it doesn't mean that it is bad.

For my taste it's too sweet, too unrealistic, too full of clichés. It's me.

Nevertheless, I think that this story meets the required conditions to be a successful TV mini series.

Considering a lot of dialogues...a scriptwriter doesn't need to change a lot for a screenplay adaptation.

If you're looking for a light MM-romance with a tiny dose of misunderstandings, with a sweet and unrealistic plot(who cares?), with a predictable candy HEA then it is your book.
