



Astounding!

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Carter Evans is founder and editor-in-chief of Astounding!—a formerly popular spec fiction magazine currently in its death throes. Not only can he do nothing to save it, but stuck in a rathole apartment with few interpersonal connections, he can't seem to do much to rescue his future either. And certainly all the booze isn't helping. He snaps when he receives yet another terrible story submission from the mysterious writer J. Harper—and in a drunken haze, Carter sends Harper a rejection letter he soon regrets.

J. Harper turns out to be John Harper, a sweet man who resembles a '50s movie star and claims to be an extraterrestrial. Despite John's delusions, Carter's apology quickly turns into something more as the two lonely men find a powerful connection. Inexplicably drawn to John, Carter invites him along on a road trip. But as they travel, Carter is in for some big surprises, some major heartbreak... and just maybe the promise of a good future after all.

Astounding! Details

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From Reader Review Astounding! for online ebook

Arch Bala says

Truly astounding!

I can't at the genius that is Kim Fielding.

Beautiful characters, beautiful story and a visit from some of Ms. Fielding's other novels' amazing characters!

perfect is perfect!

thank you Kim Fielding for yet another wonderful piece!

5 astounding stars!

I wasn't aware of Tab Hunter and had to google him - ^^ shucks! ^^

Lilia Ford says

The title definitely fits this book which consistently surprises--deeply in the sense that the surprising aspects are mostly the exact opposite of those you'd expect in sci-fi (or any story) that aspires to be astounding! It's a strange, quiet fable about inspiration and hope and friendship and dreams and getting older, that seems to go out of its way to subvert almost all the usual drivers of plot, suspense, or even conflict, whether romantic or supernatural. The result is lovely and tender and almost unbearably sweet. There are times when that quietness can feel like a lack of momentum--this is probably not the best story for those who love suspense or high octane action sequences--but fans of Fielding's healing stories will definitely find what they are looking for here.

Paul says

4.5 STARS

For a nice formatted view click here [http://ontopdownunderbookreviews.com/...](http://ontopdownunderbookreviews.com/)

I absolutely love it when Kim Fielding decides to go on yet another genre freestyling endeavour. I get chills when she does this.

Like so many of her other books you just never know what to expect. Its like oh, she's chosen this genre, but what is she going to do with it? Whenever I read the blurb to one of Kim Fielding's books and I get that excited itch begging to start between my shoulders, I know I have to get that book in my hands ASAP.

I've never been let down once when this happens to me. Every time one of her more intriguing synopses

pops up I'm never disappointed. These are the books she writes that I cherish because another bizarre and highly creative story has been crafted and they always turn out to be exceptional books that I can't put down.

The next thing I know the sun is rising and I'm on the last page yet again. *Astounding!* was quite slow to begin with, but picks up the pace as it goes along. It wove itself into a magical tale and latches onto the reader to take them along for a stunning, yet heartbreaking ride.

Astounding! is Carter Evans and Carter Evans is astounding, but he doesn't quite know it yet. At 37 all his dreams, aspirations and hard work to keep his spec fiction magazine running is futile, and after struggling for months he finally concedes to his painfully stubborn nature and prepares to publish his final edition. Even Freddy, his ex-partner in both business and pleasure, that helped him begin his publication *Astounding* about 15 years ago has long moved from Seattle onto bigger and better things, now rubbing shoulders in L.A and having people squabble over him to put his novels on the screen. Freddy and Carter are still best friends and Carter is genuinely happy for his success. He also likes his longtime partner, Keith, but his hard hitting of the bottle over the last few months is beginning to make him bitter about everything.

Carter's years of hard work editing stories and making new writers careers bloom has come to an end. He is up to his neck in debt and too proud to tell anyone about just how bad it is and far too proud to ask for any kind of financial help.

The final straw comes in a drunken blur as the never-ending arrival of another shocking story from one J. Harper arrives, just as he realises that he is about to print his final edition. The mystery man has been sending in bizarre stories for years about an alien that's stuck on earth with no way home and he's extremely lonely. The basic premise of his manuscripts doesn't vary much and neither does his woeful writing.

So J. Harper, who has been sending him these utterly useless stories for years, is on the receiving end of Carter's wrath as he spits out one nasty drunken rejection letter. He doesn't realise that he posted it until he returns home the next night to see it pop into life as he switches on his home computer and it's staring him in the face.

Carter is so mortified, as it's out of character for him, that he actually travels from Seattle to Portland to apologise in person. As John Harper opens the door to Carter Evans, he is shocked that Carter has driven all this way and ends up making a deal with John out of guilt, saying OK, you give me a good enough reason in person as to why you've been sending me these stories for years and if its good enough, I'll publish it in my final edition.

John is so shattered about this, more so over the fact that he needs his story in this soon-to-be final edition, he then proceeds to take Carter out for dinner and then drinks. He's nervous, but finally cuts to the chase and tells Carter the truth, explaining his story. As crazy as it seems, Carter indulges John's delusions as he seems like a nice guy even though he should probably be in a psych ward. It gets too late for Carter to drive home so he very cautiously spends the night on John's couch, but a middle of the night dash to the toilet suddenly turns around as Carter and John literally crash into each others lives, with Carter ending up in John's bed.

Freddy still writes for *Astounding!* as he loves it, but little does he know that Carter has organised every kick ass author to submit one final article. No one knows that this will be the final edition so he indulges John and adds his article too. Freddy's article is incredible, as are all the others, so Carter gets organised and edits frantically as he quietly packs up and sells off the last of his possessions, leaving his life behind without anyone knowing just how bad his situation really is. He wants to go out with an *Astounding!* bang, but it's unfortunately going to be much bigger than he ever expected it to be.

Freddy, to his absolute shock, has finally convinced Carter during this time to take a road trip with himself and his partner Keith, shucking off the high life and deciding to rent a huge RV, fly to Seattle, pick up Carter and go from there – not having a clue that Carter has absolutely nothing to come back to as they head off out of Seattle on their road trip.

As they're driving through Portland, Carter gets an overwhelming urge to stop by John's place and the next thing they know, John is along for the ride. Much to everyone's surprise.

While love blossoms exponentially between Carter and John within the span of a few days, Carter discovers that John has actually told him the truth. While Keith can't figure out what the hell is going on every time he tries to take a photo of John, he get nothing but static where John is in the photo making it harder and harder to keep his secret in such a confined space.

This is where Kim Fielding rules the roost. She takes her time in a round about way with this beautiful story. The main characters are excellent, as is Freddy. The writing is slow and methodical in this novel, which I found a little disconcerting in the beginning, but it pays off in the end big time. It's a slow and steady wins the race in this wonderful novel, as it slowly progresses and builds to a beautiful place.

Kim Fielding then steps in and delivers a swift and painful knee right into your solar plexus. Even though you know it's coming it still manages to knock the breath from your body and leaves you gasping for air, but she keeps the pace of the book trudging along as it takes a 90° turn to allow a new chapter of life to go on.

It almost feels like a new book has begun. As one chapter is painfully closed a new one begins. With a fresh storyline, it's almost a little jarring as it happens so fast and literally begins from scratch.

There is a completely new plot in place with new scenarios and friendships unfurling in a new town with a fresh start. It's just written so well, and although it's a huge jolt and a shock to the system, you're guided into it somehow, and quite smoothly too.

The story you've been reading and are accustomed to is just gone and yet you get to slowly feel comfortable with this new plot quite quickly. It flows pretty smoothly into this new existence as you've just watched the beginnings of what feels like a metamorphosis of a caterpillar turn into a butterfly. It's one of the only analogies I can compare it to because even though it such a sad and fast change, I felt like I got to watch a butterfly hatch to spread his wings and let me tell you, he was stuck in that cocoon for way too long.

So I have to applaud the way that was handled, due to some writing that was like the sleight of hand that a magician uses to distract you while you're dealing with some great loss, but it's not all bad as Carter finds his new life. He now has wings that no one can take away from him and if it wasn't for that, who knows how things would have turned out for him? If these changes didn't occur in his life he never would have survived the final smack down that gets thrown at him yet again, but I'll let you digest that and figure it all out for yourselves.

If you're a fan of Kim Fielding's books that are on the stranger side of life then it's a done deal. I had to think about this for a while to try and find the right words as to why I loved this story so much. It is just beautiful.

Heather K (dentist in my spare time) says

3.5 stars

Kim Fielding is one of my most consistent authors, and I know I can count on her for a well-written story. I don't think I've read a book from her that I haven't liked, and many I've *loved* to the point of obsession. **She writes off-beat, interesting stories with atypical characters that stay with you long after the story is finished.**

This was a sweet and simple sci-fi story about a alien trying to get home and a jaded editor of a folding magazine. John (aka, the alien) was a beautiful, lost man who finally made a human connection after all these years. My heart ached for him, and I think he was portrayed really beautifully. Carter was a depressed guy, drinking too much and getting down on life, when he met John and his life changed for the better. These two guys had nice, easy chemistry, and I enjoyed reading about them as a couple.

I liked all of the characters, including the side characters (Carter's ex and his ex's husband), and I slid into the plot of the story easily. Sometimes, it was too easy. I felt like for an alien, John seemed too naïve and too human, for all his little eccentricities. I wanted a little more tension, a little more umph to the storyline.

I also found parts of this book to be a little slow. Don't get me wrong, this book was lovely, but it wasn't a story that excited me, for good or for bad. However, if you are looking for another sweet story from the very talented Kim Fielding, this could be just what you need.

Copy provided by the publisher in exchange for an honest review

Riina Y.T. says

Kim Fielding is such a brilliant storyteller.

I don't know how to put it into words; it's solid and engaging and always feels so... mature, serious and yet funny in an endearing way.

Ele says

3.5 stars

I liked this but it wasn't my favorite Kim Fielding book. This is entirely on ME. Although I'm more of a Contemporary kind of reader I devour the author's fantasy stories and that says a lot.

I liked the first half of the book a lot and it really sucked me in. But I'm really not a fan of sci-fi and especially stories with aliens, so I kind of struggled with the second half (which I suppose must be other readers' favorite part).

If Science fiction is your thing, this is a 5 star read. Very romantic and the characters are truly amazing. And

although I didn't enjoy it that much, it is clear that Kim Fielding is definately one of the best authors out there and I believe she could write anything she chose to.

For more, go read Jewel's and Dani's review.

Tully Vincent says

4.5 stars

A fun and unusual read, with some nice touches of humor. The story drew me in very quickly and the characters were wonderfully drawn. Carter wasn't perfect, had a bit of softness around the middle at the start and did some stupid things—in other words, someone very easy to relate to. And John was just so sweet, as well as strong and determined which we see later in the story. The sparks that flew between them was hot, but also tender and sweet. And at times, bittersweet, because Carter and John encounter some road bumps along their journey.

There are also guest appearances by three other couples: Travis and Drew from the Speechless series, Karl and Ery from Dry Bones, and William and Colby from The Tin Box.

The story had many things I enjoy: sci-fi, characters that are writers or artists, and road trips. The road trip element is well-done, taking us to various cool places like Yosemite but never letting the trip overwhelm the story.

Eugenia says

RTC....sooooooo cute and sweet and a little heartbreakng with explosive alien star sex!!! Loved it!!! This is going on my comfort reads list!! HEA!

John The Cosmic Wanderer says

As usual Kim delivers a wonderful! story! It was a bit slow on some parts but Carter and John are so good! together, especially John. He made me cry :(!. A feel good book with lovely! characters!

FYI: Tab Hunter - 1950's heartthrob :)

Kade Boehme says

I really can't say enough good about Kim Fielding, but I'm pretty sure it says enough that I, hater of all fantasy and PRN, could not be more addicted to her story telling or her characters. I fell in love with John right alongside carter and was left just as breathless when they flew together. I can't give higher compliment

than saying Ms Fielding is quite seriously the only non-contemporary author on my auto buy list.

This was fabulous. Def recommended.

Jewel says

"...it was -- is -- the most goddamn amazing thing that's ever happened to me. I don't have words for it. Nobody would. Not even you, Freddy. It was a revelation and a miracle and pure joy."

Astounding! is the first book by Kim Fielding that I've read and I'm wondering, right about now, what the hell took me so long? I loved this book! It was quirky and the characters were interesting and fun and the cover really reminds me of those old speculative fiction magazines from my childhood, which I very much loved.

Carter Evans is the owner and editor of a dying speculative fiction magazine called "Astounding!" and he is in a bad mental place because his baby is dying. He has devoted more than a decade of his life to his magazine, but it just isn't paying the bills anymore, so as much as he really hates to do it, it is time to let it go.

Every month for more than a year, Carter has received a manuscript from a J. Harper. It's drivel. Worse than drivel, even. And every month, Carter sends out the standard rejection letter. Except one time when he wrote what he really thought of it and sent a rather rude letter back to Mr. Harper. So, when Carter receives another manuscript the next month, that is basically just like all the others, it revives his guilty feelings for the last rejection he sent and Carter decides to apologize to J. Harper in person.

John Harper is a lot more than he seems, though. He's gorgeous, like a 1950's movie star, and he has a vintage style. He's such a nice guy that Carter feels even more guilty and from that guilt came a promise to print one of John's stories if only John will tell him why it is so important. And, though Carter doesn't not believe John's story about being extraterrestrial and just wanting to go home, he keeps his word and even likes John.

And that is where things get interesting. Meeting John really changes Carter. He stops drinking so much, and he gets into shape and he starts seeing life with a positive lens. He even decides to take his ex-boyfriend, Freddy and Freddy's current boyfriend Keith up on a vacation in a rental RV and, you know, live a little. And, when a last minute decision has Carter inviting John along, all the better.

I often don't really like ex's hanging around in my stories, but I really liked Freddy. He's so supportive and encouraging to Carter and that they are still such good friends is such a good thing. And mixing John in was wonderful.

The story was a bit magical in how John's nature really effected Carter and their inevitable separation felt fresh, and even a little final, even though you know everything will work out in the end. And the ending was so damn perfect! The happiest of happy endings, in my book.

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

Astounding! is the name of this book. It's also the name of a science fiction magazine that Carter founded with his long-ago boyfriend, Freddy.

Now Freddy, married to nice guy Keith, is a well-known, wealthy book and screen writer, and Carter is broke, depressed, and on the verge of alcoholism. Freddy hasn't given up on Carter, but Carter has given up on himself.

In a fit of drunken rage, Carter writes a vitriolic rejection letter to one J. Harper, who keeps submitting crappy stories via snail mail about an alien wanting to go home.

Carter is bitter and jaded, but in a moment of sincere regret he drives all the way from Seattle to Portland to apologize to J. Harper, who looks like the 50s movie idol Tab Hunter.

John made my heart ache, what with his beautiful, sad face and little duplex full of mid-Century furniture and books. John invites Carter for pancakes. And Carter can't help but fall a little for this shy, kind man who begs Carter to publish his story.

Meeting John changes Carter. John makes Carter believe that his magazine mattered, that Carter made people's lives better by letting them escape, if only for a little while.

When he's with John, Carter can run faster, harder. He senses things, feels things deeply. Carter is not afraid, not anymore.

Carter wants John to stay, even if John believes that he's an alien and that his people will come to take him ... home. Except it's not home. Not anymore.

This is a story that explores the energy and connection that exist between two lonely men who come together physically and emotionally.

INCLUDES:

-A road trip to Yosemite in an RV that bites the dust

-Friends, including one persistent ex-boyfriend, who care enough to drag you on said road trip

-Suspiciously uncooperative electronics

-Tender, passionate love making between two men who make each other fly (in more ways than one)

-Guest appearances by Travis and Drew from *Speechless* , Ery and Karl from *Bone Dry* , and even William and Colby from *The Tin Box*

Kim Fielding is undoubtedly one of the best writers in this genre. She's an amazing writer. Period. Her prose flows and draws you in.

Reading her stories is effortless. It's magic.

Regardless of your take on extraterrestrial life, this book will make you think, and cry a little.

***Astounding!* is wondrous! It's worthy of every exclamation point.**

I stayed up until 2 a.m. reading this book. And I'm not sorry.

Heller says

4.75

Damn you Kim Fielding. You made me cry.

An editor of a dying spec magazine and a guy who says he's an alien. I don't know what I expected but this exceeded whatever my meager imagination had lined up. It's a trippy little road trip story.

This story also touches on characters that I love from the Bones and Speechless universe as well as a memorable cameo with the characters from The Tin Box. My heart is full.

Kim says

You know those spec fic pulp magazines? Like Amazing Stories, Azimov's Science Fiction, and Fantastic. They had those gorgeous covers and they published a lot of wonderful authors. They served as one of my inspirations for this book--and for Paul Richmond's beautiful cover. Add to that a road trip, a man who looks like Tab Hunter and claims to be an alien, and an editor down on his luck, and you've got *Astounding!* I hope folks enjoy reading it as much as I enjoyed writing it.

Cory says

This was excellent! John and Carter were so cute together (so were Freddy and Keith)!

I didn't really read the blurb so I wasn't 100% sure what it was about, but I absolutely love all things Kim Fielding so I didn't really care. Boy was I shocked as it wasn't anything that I expected.

From the cover I thought it was about two hot guys camping. How can that not be at least a 3 star read right? It was so much more.

John was absolutely adorable and now I really want to go to a restaurant where I can make my own pancakes. So great!

