



## **Stand By You**

*A.M. Arthur*

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Three months after his rescue from an abusive boyfriend, twenty-two-year-old Romy Myers has landed his first legitimate job—bussing tables at his friend's new coffee shop. The job has brought him some stability after years of abuse have left him feeling damaged and broken. He's working hard on his panic and social anxiety, and those things are often tempered by the big, burly presence of Brendan Walker.

From the moment ex-football player Brendan helped rescue Romy from his ex's abuse, he's wanted to protect him. And he does, from a distance, with joking text messages, a new gym routine to toughen him up and a genuine friendship. So far it's been easy—but Brendan's feelings aren't just friendly anymore...

When an argument spirals out of control, a hot and heavy make-out session causes Romy's friendship with supposedly straight Brendan to reach a new level. The last thing Romy wants is to fall for another guy who could potentially shatter him, but Brendan also wakes up a part of him he thought had been destroyed by violence—his heart.

76,000 words

## **Stand By You Details**

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Author : A.M. Arthur

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# From Reader Review Stand By You for online ebook

## Guilty Pleasures Book Reviews says

Slick's review posted on Guilty Pleasures Book Reviews

4.5 STARS

Review copy provided for an honest review

Sometimes a book just hits you in the gut and knocks the wind out of you and that's exactly what happened to me with *Stand By You* with A.M. Arthur. This was not an easy book to read there were elements of negligence, abuse, hate, and prejudice. On top of that it's the story of two men who find each other while one is recovering from a horrific incident and the other is coming to terms with his sexuality; it is raw, harsh, and unfortunately real but I loved that in all the bad, they find something to be happy about, something that makes them smile, and someone who loves them no matter what. It really is quite a remarkable love story despite its gritty underbelly.

It's hard to know where to begin with this review because the story comes in bits and pieces. Romy Myers is working in his friend's coffee shop and living in his guest bedroom after a disastrous relationship goes really, really bad. Romy hates being indebted to his friends but for the time being he has to be and he's trying to make the best of it. He knows he has issues and he has reasons for his issues but at the moment he's not ready to deal with them. Romy doesn't understand why Brendan the huge man who is friends with another one of his friends makes him feel safe but he thinks it stems from the fact that the man helped rescue him and held him when he needed it and he likes the way Brendan makes him feel.

These two have so many obstacles to overcome and none of them are easy. Romy doesn't trust easily and Brendan is just beginning to realize that he is in fact gay and has been suppressing his feelings for years. They have a ton of baggage and Brendan has a family he adores that has no clue he's ever even had same sex feelings. I really loved watching Romy move forward and begin to heal with gentle urging from Brendan. Brendan was very good for Romy and helped him to start taking better care of himself and to bolster his self esteem which was so low, but it wasn't one sided Romy encouraged Brendan to also move forward in his life and was there for him when he needed a friend.

This is a very hard review to write without spoilers so I'm just going to say please read it; please remember to love and support your children no matter what, please help others when they need you, and please don't judge others for doing what they had to do to survive. Books like *Stand By You* always make me thankful for the life I have and makes me hurt for those who have had to live through horrendous things in their lives. While these two men faced so many obstacles the thing they never lost sight of was the way they felt when they were together and the love they shared and that my friends made it one hell of a fantastic love story.

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## Heather K (dentist in my spare time) says

\*3.5 stars\*

**Very sweet Out-For-You story but a little over-the-top for my tastes.**

I've been dying for this story ever since we met Romy. Poor Romy has had it rough, man. He's been used and

abused so many times that I've lost count. I was really rooting for a fabulous story for him, and was salivating at the idea that big, strong Brendan could be his love interest.

In terms of the "aww factor," this book does pretty well. Brendan is irresistibly adorable in his love for Romy, and the slow way that their relationship developed over time was really well done. Romy and Brendan obviously cared deeply for one another, and I really got a sense of their connection. I also love, and I mean LOVE, gay first-timers, so Brendan going at it with Romy was a sight for sore eyes.

However, I did have some issues. Romy was a bit one note for me. He was sort of broken and forlorn as a character, and I almost viewed him as an abused child versus as a man in need of healing. He didn't seem like an adult in many ways, and Brendan almost seemed like a protector/father figure, which didn't work for me. In that same vein, the sex scenes seemed a little off for me. Less hot and more... careful? Something wasn't all there.

And the angst! Woah, totally angst-central. It bordered on too much, even for an angst-lover like me.

While I certainly liked this story, even really liked it at times, I didn't enjoy it as much as Ezra and Donner's story. And Tag's story better be next because I'm dying to hear more about that man!

**\*\*Copy provided by the publisher in exchange for an honest review\*\***

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**\*P\*u\*r\*p\*l\*e\* Masochist says**

*~Arc provided via Netgalley in exchange for honest review~*

*This review is posted on Way Too Hot Books.*

First thing I have to say is that this book is **the 3d installment in Belonging series** which I, unfortunately, didn't know before requesting this arc, because there was no mention of it or maybe I unintentionally skipped it, I'm not sure. It doesn't even matter anymore. If I had been aware of it, I would have probably read the series in order, because I prefer doing it the right way, but the positive thing is that, even though being part of the series meaning it features characters from the previous books, the book can be read as a standalone.

**Emotional, bitter-sweet & touching.**

It's a story about **emotional and mental healing** of one of the sweetest characters I read about- *Romy Myers*. Romy is a 22 year old guy who spent almost half of his life homeless or sleeping at places of complete strangers. He lost his family when he was only 13 years old and he had to take care of himself ever since then. It's little to say that he didn't have an easy life. Only 22 years old and having been through so much tragedy and pain. My heart was breaking while reading about the things he's been through and the scars those situations left on his psyche. All his life he's been yearning for some love and safety, but unfortunately, always coming up short-handed.

Then we have his personal Superman who comes to his rescue when he's at the very bottom- **Brendan Walker**, deeply in the closet, ex-football player. Brendan might seem strong and confident on the outside, but he has his own issues to deal with which may not be as heavy as Romy's, but nevertheless, they keep preventing him from being his true self and leading the life he always wanted. He's not your typical jock, at least not anymore. He's sweet, caring and very protective of his friends and family what I found most admirable about him. Both of them are broken, each in their own way, but maybe together they can help each other heal and give the one thing that's been missing in their lives- love.

The story is told from both their point of views. What I liked the most about it is that it is **about ordinary, relate-able people** and not some super hot and rich heirs like usual. There was no insta-love, but **slow building of friends-lovers relationship**. There was also no bigger drama, but this is not exactly a light read. It's is not a dark read in its true sense, but the story does deal with **some heavy issues** like physical and sexual abuse. It's a type of a story which will make you appreciate more your own little bubble of happiness when you're sad or depressed and maybe even make you ashamed of occasional dark thoughts, because in reality, there are probably billion of people out there having it much worse than you do.

Now, about the things which in my opinion need a little bit improving is the writing which needs a tiny bit of polishing. It was maybe a little bit too simple for my taste and also the story as a whole needs more editing, but it is stated in the arc that this is an unproved copy which will be edited once more before the publishing, so everything is good then. I also would have preferred, as far as the plot is concerned, if there had been a little more drama or some twist towards the end just to spice things up a bit and if some complicated situations didn't conclude so quickly without enough effort considering what they were about.

**All in all, if you want to read a bitter-sweet mm story with real, ordinary, but lovable characters then this is a story for you.**

This is my first book by A. M. Arthur, but it was a fairly good way to start :).

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## **Rachel says**

4.5 Stars

This is the best one yet!

I really loved having a story about Romy and Brendan. I was so completely invested in these characters because of their presence in the previous two (Romy) or one (Brendan) book. From the second book, I immediately loved Brendan. I think he's my favorite character so far, which is saying something because Ezra is so wonderful.

This read a lot like a Gay for You without being one... so a realistic gay for you ;p So if that's your thing, you'd probably enjoy this one.

I liked Romy well enough, and I was certainly invested in his character. He's sort of been the sad puppy character in the previous books. He never stole my heart, but I was always curious about him and how he would turn out.

Brendan, however, is super freakin fantastic and stole my heart immediately. And now even though I'm not as attached to Romy, Brendan's attachment to Romy is one of the key reasons why he's just so awesome. And I thoroughly enjoyed the "bear" jokes directed toward him lol.

This book did deal with a lot of hard issues, (view spoiler) and it managed to deal with them seriously without feeling like the book was morose or depressing. Again, I think Brendan was a large part of that.

Highly recommended. If you like M/M and haven't read this series, why haven't you? Just one-click these already ;p

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### **Vanessa theJeepDiva says**

I knew from the moment Brendan carried Romy out of the nightmare that Romy had been living in for far too long that they would have an amazing story. Arthur did not disappoint. Readers witness that horrific scene in *Maybe This Time*. Not all that much time passes between books and the romance that blossoms between Romy and Brendan in *Stand by You* reflects that.

Romy is a mess. He's been a mess since he was fifteen years old and forced to live a life that no one should experience at any age much less at fifteen. He bounces from man to man (bed to bed) in a clingy dependency that he's relied upon for far too many years to keep a roof over his head and food in his belly. All that has come to an abrupt halt when a bed partner takes rough to the extreme with a possessiveness that nearly breaks Romy.

Having good friends is an amazing thing. Having great friends who can call on the ex football star gentle giant known as Brendan possibly saved Romy's life. Brendan has not been able to get Romy off his mind since the day Donner called him about a friend in need. Brendan knows he doesn't have much to offer Romy. His status as a straight guy is definitely something that will keep distance between him and the object of his affection. He gives Romy what he can, his friendship and protection.

I loved this final installment in the *Belonging* series. Romy and Brendan made complete sense as a couple. Brendan was the perfect balm to Romy's broken soul. Brendan was understanding and compassionate to Romy. He encouraged Romy to get the help needed to battle all of his problems. Brendan was the steady rock that Romy needed in his life. Romy is so damaged yet he is strong in the fact that he knows he can't continue living the way he has been. Romy knows he needs to come out of the dark place that he has been in. Romy also knows that he doesn't want to go back to the Romy of last year. This is such an amazing story of love and triumph and growth. I absolutely loved it.

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### **Gigi says**

I'm going to put this one down for now with plans to re-read. I was enjoying the story but put 2 books ahead of it and feel the need to start over. Soon, because I was enjoying these boys.

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### **Justin Nova says**

2.5 This one is a little hard to rate because I liked the first book in this series and loved the second one. This

one was just way over the top with the angst and drama. I liked Romy and Brendon but Romy was just so damaged I was more concerned with him getting counselling than I was with him finding love and happiness. The longer the book went on, it seemed like more and more bad stuff kept piling on to him. So while I think the writing and characters were fine, it was just way too much darkness and bad stuff happening to these sweet guys for me to enjoy the book.

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### **Debra says**

I've been waiting for Romy's story having seen bits of it in three books now. Romy has been through hell and here he finds comfort in Donner's best friend Brendan. This one was different, with a slow build as Romy and Brendan are friends first and Romy has a lot of issues to deal with. Brendan is one of the few people that Romy feels comfortable with, and Romy believes he is straight. It did seem at first that Romy's part of the relationship was based on a bit of hero worship, but A.M. Arthur took the time for the two men to really form a bond as Romy worked through his issues and Brendan came to terms with his feelings.

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### **Jennifer Lavoie says**

I have been waiting for this book since I met Romy in the first book. And then wanted it even harder when I met Brendan. I've never written a review like this before so please excuse me.

First, when finding out the book was Romy and Brendan

Because BRENDAN.

And then I

And then it was like

And yeah.

I completely neglected the fact that I have not only my OWN CONTRACTED BOOK to finish writing, but also homework for grad class.

Worth it?

Next book with Tag please.

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## **Fernanda Parente says**

Sweet Romy... so much angst

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## **Christi Snow says**

My Review:

Romy's story is painful...just in the helplessness there is in it. He was on his own...too young...too trusting...too naive. And he got hurt...in a horrible, awful way. Brendan, although he didn't know Romy before that, was the muscle behind Romy's rescue from the abuse. As a result, Brendan has become Romy's safe place to land. And this kid needs a safe place. He's a poster child for PTSD and is haunted by nightmares.

Although Brendan is almost ready to admit it to himself, he is deeply, DEEPLY in the closet. Even though ALL of his friends are gay, no one even guesses that he might be into guys. For Brendan, he's always been a big, bad, alpha football player with a family who wouldn't understand if he tells them that he wants to date a guy. But he's drawn to Romy...partly because he feels so protective of him. Protecting is something that Brendan does well and he definitely serves that role in their relationship. It's only when he's at Brendan's place that Romy can sleep without nightmares and of course, that leads to other things happening between the two.

Romy is in a difficult place mentally. He doesn't need any more challenges like a boyfriend struggling with accepting his sexuality. But Romy is so fragile. Both of them know that their's isn't a recommended relationship, but they can't resist. It's the instinctive nature of both of them. Brendan protects. Romy is accepting and giving. They may not be natural, but they work.

Overall I enjoyed this book. Both these guys are more than a little down on themselves and are finding it hard to imagine a better future, but when they are together they dare to dream that something different can happen in their lives and that's why this book worked for me. There were issues with the book...Romy is a catalog of everything that can happen to a single character and at times it was just a bit too much. There is also a LOT of group dynamics which make the book overwhelming at times. There are tons of group scenes and it's difficult to keep up with who belongs to who and how they all relate within the group. But I did enjoy the book, the coffeehouse setting, and the romance between the two men.

I received a complimentary copy of this book in return for an honest review.

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## **Lauren at Live Read and Breathe Reviews says**

**4 Heart Warming Stars!!**

*Source: eARC for Honest Review Courtesy of Carina Press via NetGalley*



We meet both Romy and Brendan in *Maybe This Time*. Brendan is Donner's straight best friend and Romy is Ezra's old friend with benefits. After horrific circumstances, Romy is broken and Brendan is gutted.

Brendan is so confused, he's never really been gay but there is something about Romy that calls to him and makes him want to take care of him. Romy's trying to heal and move on but he's scared of his own skin. The only person he truly feels safe with is Brendan which is hard for him to come to terms with since he's basically a stranger.

Both these fragile boys start to need each other and explore more but it's a vulnerable journey for these two. For them to be something more Brendan first has to admit that he is gay to himself and his family while Romy has to trust in himself and find his self value.

**"I'm a walking disaster, Bren, I don't know what a real relationship is."**

**"It ain't a big mystery. It's two people who wanna be together takin' care of each other. You figure out your problems together." He swallowed, mouth suddenly dry. "It's loving someone more than you love yourself."**

Gah! Poor Romy such a hard journey for him but thankfully he has a new family with Ezra, Donner, Alessandro, Jaime and Brendan that he is finally able to be happy and feel secure in himself and truly fall in love with the most unlikely person. But these two are so perfect and suited for one another that you can't do anything but root for this oddly matched duo.

This series was great with such heart wrenching stories about unexpected love, second chances, and hope.

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## **Denise H. says**

A. M. Arthur writes some wonderful characters. Deeply thought-filled and emotional people that we love. Brendan helps feed the homeless, works as a janitor, and helps his friends when called upon. He's a big, strong, sweet man who loves his family, too. In the last book he helped rescue Romy. Here we have Romy a few months later, working and trying to cope after his severely abusive ex nearly killed him. Ezra, Donner, and Brendan rescued him back then, and he still suffers from anxiety and panic attacks, plus PTSD. Brendan was attracted to Romy right away, but he's not "out" yet. What will his family say ?? Romy's ex is stalking and threatening, threw a brick and hit Romy, and FINALLY Romy presses charges. The relationship with Romy and Brendan builds slowly, and it's raw and incredible. With the interesting story, hot M/M sexiness,

and terrific characters you will be happy you read this one. The ex gets well earned jail time, and the guys want to be together for the long haul. I agree with another reviewer about Romy thinking Brendan will hurt him just because he beat up the ex after he was rescued. Brendan never told anyone about the beat down, but word got out. It is not fair of Romy to think Brendan is abusive, too, no way. But then, I don't have the abuse issues Romy had, so I don't really know. I'm glad they could settle that and move beyond. Highly recommend this wonderful story. ENJOY !!!!

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### **Donna says**

Could this woman write a more perfect book? I will continue to read her wonderful stories to find out! ;D

I was a bit worried how dark this book was going to get and, yes, it crossed the line of my comfort zone, but that is on me and I wouldn't change a thing about the story... it was perfect! IMHO!!!

I don't feel like I could post a detailed review without using a hundred or more "spoiler" tags, so I am just going to say that no matter how bad life is, or how badly you have been beaten down, remember... you will mean the world to someone out there... just keep living and looking until you find that special "one"!

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### **Vfields Don't touch my happy! says**

One of Her Best Stand By You is the third in The Belonging series and in my opinion, the best in the series. This time we get Romy and Brennan's story. At the end of book #2 we discovered that Romy had been seriously abused by Carlos and the guys get together and rescue him. This is about his survival, healing, growing, strengthening, and loving. AM Arthur did not rush the story. She took the time to let these characters think, try, fail, and finally succeed. There is angst but not too much or should I say it's all appropriate for the situations. Integrating characters from past stories and introducing us to characters who will be in the next stories or another series was very well done. I did have one major pet peeve and that's about the cover. On the cover the two MCs look about the same size. But in the book their story hinges on the fact that they are total physical opposites. That drove me nuts! I think it'll be OK to have a big gorgeous black guy on the cover. It will still sell and if it doesn't, Shame!

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