



Adagio

Chris Owen

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Love Is What Happens When You're Making Other Plans...

Five years after arriving in Australia, Jason Stuart is finally embarking on the dream that brought him Down Under: going on "walkabout" in the Australian Outback. But Jason is not that fresh-faced and untried boy from Canada anymore. Jason is a man with half a decade of bad memories and worse nightmares. His friends think he's crazy, or possibly just plain stupid, but Jason needs to make his dream real in order to face his past.

Everything changes when Jason picks up an unexpected travel companion. Suddenly, it's not his past that Jason needs to confront, it's his future.

Part coming-of-age tale, part romance, part travel yarn, Adagio paints a heartwarming picture of a fledgling relationship between two very different men against the lush backdrop of Australia's natural wonders.

Adagio Details

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Author : Chris Owen

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From Reader Review Adagio for online ebook

Dee Wy says

Though the story got off to a slow start, once Jason meets Ryan, things begin to heat up and get interesting. I thought both characters were well developed and liked them both. Their relationship made for a sweet read. A road trip through Australia was a bonus.

This is an early work from Chris Owen and it was a bit noticeable in the writing style and the slow start, but the story is a good one and well worth reading. Available in print only when I purchased it.

Paola says

My rating: 4.5

I read this book following a recommendation from a friend, who knew I'd read other books by the same author and that I'd liked them. This was no exception. I simply could not put this book down. I'm not sure when this novel had originally been written (though the paper format edition I bought was published in 2008), or if the story is supposed to take place a few years earlier than the time of writing, because for one I was a little surprised none of the characters had a cellphone. Whatever the time period, I was fascinated by the story, even more because of the slightly 'old-fashioned' feel to it, but mainly because of the charming main characters, especially Ryan, and the mesmerising quality of the Australian landscape. I've been twice to Australia, and travelled extensively there, following a similar route to the one taken by the protagonists, and I had the time of my life. I could certainly empathise with so much the characters witness and experience during their trip. However, I was also glad that the author kept the focus of the story on the characters and their inner journeys, on their love story, and their character growth.

I admire the author for not making this story too predictable or sugar-sweet. What's interesting to me is how both protagonists at the start of the novel are already well drawn from the start, and well defined by their past and their nature, but each of them is not only progressing and growing, but continually being reborn during the course of the story, from the life-changing experiences they make and from each of them confronting their past and present in different ways.

Although the whole story is told from Jason's POV, it's actually Ryan who shines throughout. He has a very engaging personality, and not just because he's narrated from the POV of someone who loves him very much. Ryan is a beautiful character in his own right, with an endearing mix of self-assurance and vulnerability that is common in young gifted adolescents, who are light years ahead of others in many ways, but still lack enough life experience and 'perspective' to make the best decisions in life. One of the most engaging conversations between him and Jason, in fact, revolves around Ryan having to learn to say 'no' whenever people ask him a favour because of his giftedness, and to enjoy life as someone his age should. Jason teaches him about experiencing the world around him, more than reading about it. And their road trip across Australia becomes in this way an awakening of sorts for Ryan, whereas for Jason it represents the realisation of a long-postponed dream of travelling the vast expanse of his chosen country (he's Canadian like Ryan, but has lived in Australia for five years already by the time he meets Ryan, though he's only lived in Sydney), and an opportunity to use the unique landscape of the Outback and the tropical North as an inspiration for his painting and sketching, hopefully turning him into a well known and respected artist, after five years of battling and overcoming a dark past involving drug addiction and prostitution.

Before *Adagio*, I'd read *Bareback* and *Natural Disaster* by the same author, and found them very satisfying, particularly in terms of characterisation, sense of time and place, and especially dialogue. Those two novels are also told from a single character's POV, who is also 'resurrected' from a dark past and given a new chance

of life after paying his dues.

My only reservation, in *Adagio*, but also in those two other novels, is about the frustration I've felt whenever an important, turning-point, event is built up in the course of the novel, but then when the time comes for it to actually be narrated as it's happening, it is instead glossed over, or it even fails to be mentioned at all except it's then briefly hinted at or referenced after it's taken place, in a later chapter, as a flashback or as a reference. In *Bareback*, for example, there was a very interesting plotline about Jake reconnecting with his family of origin, and despite his past and his sexual orientation being accepted by his younger sisters and nephew. A great deal was told in detail about him exchanging letters with his sisters, but when the time came for him to meet them in person, this important event was glossed over, though we know it actually happened from hints given in later chapters. I was very disappointed as a reader not to have had a chance to 'witness' that pivotal meeting as it took place. At first reading, I even thought I might have skipped a chapter, because I was so looking forward to finally read about Jake meeting his sisters and nephew after all the anticipation.

Here in *Adagio* I felt similarly 'deprived' on two occasions. First, when the two protagonists decide to have intercourse for the first time. I'm not a voyeur, and I don't mind a mix of explicit and not-so-explicit sex in a m/m romance novel, but in this case I was very much looking forward to a more explicit, though tasteful, description of the guys' 'first time' together, especially after all the talk they'd had in previous chapters, and considering Ryan had just come out. Instead, it was like the author metaphorically closed the guys' tent door to the readers' view, and we were only allowed access after they'd made love and only to witness their post-coital conversation. There was a more explicit sex scene later on in the novel, but it didn't entirely make up for the absence of the first one.

Secondly, I would have loved to be told in more detail what Ryan's reaction had been when he first laid eyes on Jason's portraits of him. We knew Ryan couldn't wait to see those portraits, and justifiably so, but the whole thing was glossed over pretty quickly almost as a non-event. We were only told later that although Jason had to sell the actual paintings to pay towards his plane ticket to Canada, where he went to reunite with Ryan after he'd gone back to school, Jason kept all the sketches he'd made of Ryan and finally gave them to him. As satisfying as this turn of events can be, I would certainly have loved to see Ryan's reaction to those paintings the first time Jason showed them to him. I'd been anticipating this since I'd read about Jason painting Ryan, and I was disappointed the event was only glossed over.

I may be old-fashioned, but I think when an important, even pivotal, event is introduced and slowly built up in the course of a novel then it would be a little unfair to deny the reader an opportunity to read about it as it's happening, instead of it being referred to in a flashback later on.

However, this didn't prevent me from enjoying this book, like the others by the same author I've read, for all the reasons I stated above, and also for the well balanced and often witty dialogue, which shines throughout and keeps the story and the characters fresh. I also admire the good grip shown in terms of inter-generational relationships and dialogue: the part set in Canada, and the dialogue exchanged between Ryan/Jason and Ryan's parents and brother, is very well narrated and paced, and lots of important points are raised and dealt with when parents have to confront their son's coming out of the closet and moving out of the family home.

This is a novel I'll keep re-reading, for its engaging characters, a naturally-developing love story, a consistent use of POV and a fresh, witty dialogue, not to mention the sense of adventure and surprise hidden behind a long road trip through a mostly unspoilt continent. Most of all, and as with other books I've read of the same author, these are characters I've come to love and respect, whose integrity and humanity make their emotions universal and their journey of discovery a fascinating read.

Nick Duretta says

I must admit my preconceptions of self-published novels (particularly those centering on gay characters) influenced my attitude when I began reading this. Frankly, I expected it to be awful. I was increasingly surprised to discover it is actually well-written (although in need of an editor in places) and reasonably interesting. The story of Jason, a Canadian artist, handling disappointment in love by driving around the Australian outback and encountering (and falling in love with) Ryan, a younger Canadian hitchhiker, is the stuff of a million hackneyed romance novels. Would it have been written had it been about a straight couple? Perhaps. This isn't a brilliant novel by any means, but it's not bad.

Manuela says

The first half of the book is a little too slow, but the second part picks up the pace and makes the story a lot more engaging. There is something that happens at a certain point that is dealt with maybe too quickly, but it doesn't take away from the overall good quality of the book.

Chutchy says

This was a beautiful book! MC's and supporting characters. I particularly liked how it wasn't full of explicit sex scenes every few pages. It was said without words...I loved the geography and history lesson at the end. I remember watching the Australian series Boney and seeing a lot of what was talked about in the book. I liked the sensitivity shown to the original inhabitants, the Aborigines, who continually have to fight for respect. At least the MC's showed respect by NOT climbing Uluru, just going around. I would definitely read more from this author. Now I feel like going on my own walkabout!

Really fine job!

Natalie says

Sweet and slow (in a good way). This is a lovely Australian road trip story about a twentysomething artist and an 18-year-old hitchhiking student. I can't vouch for the authenticity of their travels, but the details are interesting. This book felt somewhat atypical for Chris Owen; it's sensual but the sex is mostly fade-to-black. I could have done without the info-dump at the beginning (there's a brief side plot about some drama with Jason's friends), but the relationship between Jason and Ryan more than makes up for it.

Bo says

Chris Owen never fails to deliver, and in this one she takes us on a whirlwind tourist adventure through Australia with two Canadian young men who happen to meet and, well, enjoy themselves! Starts a bit slowly as Owen begins to get us comfortable in the country and introduces characters, but then takes off and never stops exciting you with travelogue details, all nicely presented, budding romance, and--no more spoilers!! Sweet, serious and pretty damn hot.

Gerry Burnie says

Gerry B's Book Reviews

4.0 bees

In my choice of *Adagio* by **Chris Owen** [Casperian Books LLC, September 21, 2012] as my featured novel this week, three things caught my notice. First, it is about two Canadian boys, written by a Canadian author, and set in Australia.

I don't know why I like Australia as I do (I love the accents), but for whatever reason it has a certain romance to it. Therefore, it is the perfect setting for a romance of this nature.

There is very little about Canada, or even Canadian content in this story, but that's alright. The Australian outback makes up for it, and I think that the author has done a credible job of making it part of the story. Certainly I felt it's vastness, and what better way to cleanse the soul than by a 'walkabout.'

I liked the two main characters, the scarred but compassionate Jason, and the wide-eyed Ryan. They both compliment and contrast one another to produce a nice balance. I think one is more drawn to Ryan as the *ingénue*, but Jason is also travelling a road of discovery.

I also like the unhurried pace that allowed the two boys to get to know one another before their first sexual experience. The sex scenes were also well handled—which is ironic for me to say because I once criticized Ms Owen's work for being a bit too 'generous' with her couplings. Therefore, I am happy to take that criticism back with this novel.

The quibbles I have are few. A few loose threads (meaning plot lines that either disappear or aren't fully exploited later on). I, for one, like to see unexpected references to previous events, even if they are minor, because they are like grace notes that add a touch of brilliance to a story. It is the little touches like this that can make a good story outstanding.

Altogether, it is a heart warming romance in the classic style, nicely written, and set in a equally romantic locale. Four bees.

Bethany Ebert says

Blaaaaaah. I thought this book was going to be a lot better. The romantic lead, Ryan, is easily the worst romantic lead I've ever come across in M/M fiction. He's like if you took all the worst traits of a brand-new puppy and put them into human form. All he did was bounce around, blush, and babble. I felt like the age gap between the two could have been a lot more understandable if Ryan had at least something likable about his personality. But he was a very two-dimensional character. The sex scenes weren't that good - it felt like there was something missing. The dialogue was stilted. A lot of sentences omitted the personal pronoun, I think to try and convey a sense of urgency or something. I didn't like it. I wish I hadn't wasted my money on a paperback copy.

Deanna says

This was a very calm read. There is not much angst or conflict between the main characters, Jason and Ryan. I think the author did a great job of describing the country so that you feel like you are there instead of using endless, long, boring paragraphs that describe the scenery.

Macky says

Like everyone else I found myself totally immersed in what is quite simply a lovely romance between two very likeable and endearing characters. This story flows beautifully and as fabulous as the descriptions were of their road trip across Australia for me it was the love story that kept me engrossed, I thought the attraction that grew into a deep love was so believable and Jason's support for Ryan after his awful experience was touching and tender. I took to and grew to love both of them but Ryan probably stole my heart a teeny bit more. A combination of innocence, playfulness and energy but he still had an underlying maturity that stopped him from being just another 'silly teen. The age difference never seemed noticeable. A wonderful reading experience and one I will read again in the future. It had some angst but I would class it as a gentle romance with sensual love scenes that complimented it perfectly. Highly Reccomend this classy book.

Bev says

What an awesome book! I have to say that I didn't like Jason that much as a character at first, he definitely needed to sort himself out, but without a shadow of a doubt, the turning point for him was meeting Ryan. **The best part for me bar none is the love story between the two of them, tender, touching, and so, so right. Two guys so much in love, you felt their pain when they were separated, and their joy when re-united. Wonderfully romantic.**

Although there is a 'rape' scene in the book, it doesn't detract from the rest of the story, and the way that it's dealt with by Jason's friends is magnificent!

It's a fabulous, uplifting book, I love it, and will read it again and again. You almost feel as though you are taking the journey around Australia yourself with them, it's that good!

Erotic Horizon says

Adagio by Chris Owen (2006)

Vera says

At the beginning it wasn't to read fluently to me, but when Jason said goodbye to Alex and started his Trip

through Australia, and meets the first time Ryan i couldn't stop reading. It's not an typical story of Chris Owen, but the detailed description of the citys and the country of Australia fascinated me. The getting to know of the two characters Ryan and Jason and then the signs of to fall in love of Jason, i loved it. But its not only a lovestory, all the problems and dramas they have to fight for are so good worked out. I'm reading normaly *blushed* Chris Owen stories because i love the sexscenes, but in this story i don't miss it. It's a Lovestory nevertheless its not too corny.

Suze says

I don't know why but I was expecting a long, involved angsty story so had delayed reading this until I had a couple of days without too many distractions. What I got was a fast paced, quirky, light hearted tale. Yes, there were darker moments but overall it was a fairly humourous story.

Jason had descended on Sydney 5 years ago and had taken that long to get himself back on top of his life. So we get the perils of young, away from home, under belly of cities warning without living it.

Ryan is the uber intelligent nerdy type kid, travelling before knuckling down to even more advanced studying. He is the warning about experiencing life before it passes you by.

After meeting, meeting and meeting then travelling they fall in love - and we get to see some of the wonders of Australia (following along on google) - but then reality hits and they have to deal with an assault, separation, long distance and new lives.

A good life affirming coming of age story, that I enjoyed more than I thought I would. 3.75*
