



Spoiler Alert: The Hero Dies: A Memoir of Love, Loss, and Other Four-Letter Words

Michael Ausiello

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Spoiler Alert: The Hero Dies: A Memoir of Love, Loss, and Other Four-Letter Words Michael Ausiello In this evocative and gorgeously wrought memoir reminiscent of Rob Sheffield's *Love Is a Mixtape* and George Hodgman's *Bettyville*, Michael Ausiello—a respected TV columnist and founder and editor-in-chief of *TVLine.com*—remembers his late husband, and the lessons, love, and laughter that they shared throughout their fourteen years together.

For the past decade, TV fans of all stripes have counted upon Michael Ausiello's insider knowledge to get the scoop on their favorite shows and stars. From his time at *Soaps in Depth* to his influential stints at *TV Guide* and *Entertainment Weekly* to his current role as founder and editor-in-chief of the wildly popular website *TVLine.com*, Michael has established himself as *the* go-to expert when it comes to our most popular form of entertainment.

What many of his fans don't know, however, is that while his professional life was in full swing, Michael had to endure the greatest of personal tragedies: his husband, Kit Cowan, was diagnosed with a rare and very aggressive form of neuroendocrine cancer. Over the course of eleven months, Kit and Michael did their best to combat the deadly disease, but Kit succumbed to his illness in February 2015.

In this heartbreaking and darkly hilarious memoir, Michael tells the story of his harrowing and challenging last year with Kit while revisiting the thirteen years that preceded it, and how the undeniably powerful bond between him and Kit carried them through all manner of difficulty—always with laughter front and center in their relationship. Instead of a tale of sadness and loss, *Spoiler Alert: The Hero Dies* is an unforgettable, inspiring, and beautiful testament to the resilience and strength of true love.

Spoiler Alert: The Hero Dies: A Memoir of Love, Loss, and Other Four-Letter Words Details

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Nessa says

Before I give my opinion on this book, can we all please take a minute to appreciate a great title. Honestly, it is what first appealed to me and I think it is brilliant!

Ok, moment over.

Have you ever read a book and thought "How the hell am I suppose to review this?" This is that book for me. There are so many emotions and thoughts going through my head, I honestly can not get them straight. Michael Ausiello wrecked me.

This is my first time even hearing of Michael and I'm actually glad for it. I was able to go into this book with no knowledge of his writing style or personality and I loved it! This brutally honest, ridiculously real account of his life with Kit amazed me. I was sucked into their life together. From the awkward first date to the devastating last breath, I felt it all. No tells you exactly what to expect when you're loved one is dying but Michael put it all out there for the world. Every. Dirty. Detail. It didn't feel like I was reading his book, it felt like I was reading his diary. The dark humor, the heartwarming way Kit and Mike were with each other, the heartbreaking battle with cancer, all of it was there. Remarkable.

My only criticism is the final chapter. I'm really not sure what to make of it, but it doesn't change my opinion of the book.

I received this ARC from Netgalley for my honest review...but I will be buying it. I will buy it for me, I will buy it for my family, I will buy it for everyone I know that has a loved one going through this fight because even though there isn't a happy ending it is important to have someone to give you a realistic outlook on what to expect.

Seriously, if you only read one book this year, make it this one!

Larry H says

I'd rate this 4.5 stars.

It has been said the definition of insanity is doing the same thing multiple times but expecting a different result. Did I really believe I could read Michael Ausiello's lovely, bittersweet memoir *Spoiler Alert: The Hero Dies*, a book of which its editor said, "You'll cackle; you'll sob," and **not** be a sobbing mess when it was done? I mean, I cry watching the car commercial where the little boy gets a dog, and then when he's grown up and goes to college, the dog is old.

Color me insane, I guess. Spoiler alert: while I didn't sob through the entire book, I was pretty emotional.

Michael Ausiello is one of my favorite go-to sources for television-related gossip and information. I've been

following him since he wrote for *Entertainment Weekly* and TVGuide.com, and am an avid fan of the site he founded, TVLine.com. In 2001, when he met Christopher "Kit" Cowan at a benefit, he was smitten instantaneously, both because of Kit's good looks and the easy banter they quickly fell into.

Their relationship took off, but like all relationships, dealt with some rough spots along the way. Some challenges were common—dealing with infidelity, financial independence, Kit's marijuana habit, Michael's emotional insecurities—and some were a little less so: Michael's, umm, obsession with all things Smurf, and Kit's prodigious collection of sex toys. But even through the rough patches, both realized how much happier they were together, and how much they truly were two halves of a whole, along with their long-suffering cat, Mister Scooch.

In 2014, in the middle of their 13th year together, Kit was diagnosed with a rare, aggressive form of neuroendocrine cancer. For Michael, Kit's illness not only brought him face-to-face with the threat of losing the love of his life, but it reminded him of losing both of his parents to cancer when he was younger. But Michael took on the role of Kit's caregiver as fully as he did every interview with a celebrity, every column he wrote, every guest appearance he got to make on a television series.

Although the two had eschewed marriage in the past (while supporting the right of everyone to marry the person they love), they got married just before Kit's first chemo appointment. This allowed Michael to be fully engaged in every aspect of Kit's treatment and care. And while Kit faced his bleak prognosis with the same good humor he approached every day, he never seemed to get the upper hand on his cancer, and after a tough battle, he passed away in February 2015.

While *Spoiler Alert* is a chronicle of Kit's fight with cancer, and how he and Michael faced down the disease and the setbacks together, this book is more than just a sad account of a life nearing its end. This is also a story of a relationship, a love affair, from start to finish, with the funny and sweet moments, the challenges and the anxieties, and all of the emotion and beauty of two people who truly gave each other their whole heart, their humor, and their love.

This certainly was a book that hit me hard emotionally, and made me want to hold my own husband and my own loved ones a little bit closer as soon as I finished reading it. (Plus I couldn't see while reading the last chapter I was crying so hard.) But it was also a book that made me laugh, made me recognize myself and my own relationship in certain anecdotes Michael shared, and made me thankful that he was willing to share his relationship with Kit with us, although I'm sorry this is why he did.

NetGalley and Atria Books provided me an advance copy of the book in exchange for an unbiased review. Thanks for making this available!

See all of my reviews at <http://itseithersadnessoreuphoria.blo...>

Jana says

I guess I should have known based on the title that this was going to be heartbreaking. (Ya think?!) But it was also a beautiful story of love and devotion and told with plenty of humor in the voice of the author (audible version). I loved it.

Oh and smurfs. Lots of smurfs.

EDIT: I just upped it a star. It deserves the whole quintet of shiny awards. I think I'll listen again soon. And I

found a video that Michael made for Kit. He's right, Kit was one handsome guy. It's a very sweet tribute.

Jenny (Reading Envy) says

too close to home to finish

Doug says

From the very title to the synopsis provided, anyone expecting anything other than a heart wrenching, tear-jerking story of love and devotion under the most odious of circumstances is sure to be disappointed. I knew of Ausiello through my devotion to his much missed 'Ausiello Files' column in Entertainment Weekly, so was prepared for liberal doses of 'sassy gay' with the sorrow... and the author doesn't disappoint. It would be churlish and more curmudgeonly that even I am prepared to be to point out any minor flaws, since by and large this memoir delivers the goods.

My sincere thanks to Netgalley and the publisher for the ARC in exchange for this honest review.

Katie says

I'm not going to rate this because it would feel wrong to rate such an personal and intense story.

It's very well done and well told and HARD.

Joshua says

I don't think I can read this book again.

I gave it five stars because it effected me deeply. I didn't know Kit Cowan, and I don't know Michael Ausiello. Despite that, Ausiello created such a vivid portrait of their relationship that I feel like I did, and by the time in the book that Cowan was diagnosed with Stage 4 cancer (not a spoiler, obviously), I wept with them. I read the book wishing it were fiction instead of non, and sometimes cursing the fact that Ausiello was making me mourn an ending that had already happened.

I acknowledge that how I feel about this book is colored by the fact that my stepfather died of cancer, and that the timeline was similar to Cowan's. In fact, a lot of the book paralleled a lot of my life--how my mother championed for my stepfather; the way a sort of soulmate-ship was solidified in the last year of their relationship because of the cancer; Ausiello's obsession with pop culture reflecting my own (at one point in the book I thought, "This is just like this moment in Grey's Anatomy" and in the next paragraph, Ausiello expressed that as well). As such, how I feel about this book is deeply personal and somewhat cathartic.

However, none of that would have existed if Ausiello were not the talented writer that he is. The narrative flows well. There's never a time when I wished there were more or less, or that I thought I was missing out on the story. It's personal without divulging too much; it's heartfelt without being cloying; it's self-referential

without being self-pitying. It's one of the better memoirs I've read and despite the fact that I don't think I could ever read it again, I think this is a book I need to own.

Kristy says

Entertainment reporter Michael Ausiello has enjoyed immense success in his professional life, progressing from writing at a soaps magazine to Entertainment Weekly and TV Guide to his current job as co-founder at TVLine.com. Ausiello is well-known for his snarky and knowledgeable insights about pop culture and TV. But while Ausiello's career was taking off, he was going through immense personal anguish: the death of his husband, Kit, from neuroendocrine cancer in early 2015. Ausiello's memoir catalogues meeting Kit, thirteen years before his death, and also describes the heartbreaking journey of losing him to cancer--with much of the trademark wit and humor we see in many of his entertainment posts.

I don't know what possessed me to request this book. I love Ausiello, his reporting, and his columns, yes, but how I thought I'd come out unscathed from an incredibly sad memoir about a lovely gay man losing his beloved husband to cancer... I don't know. *Sure, parts of this memoir are funny and snarky, but much of it is just heartbreaking and gut-wrenching.* Good grief. There's no real equivalent of reading about a man openly and honestly telling you about losing a great love of his life.

Ausiello's memoir goes back in forth in time. While most of the book focuses on the present-day: learning about Kit's shocking diagnosis, how that affects couple, and ultimately leading up to his death. Still, he also goes back to when the two met, began to date, and fall in love. There's a sweetness to reading about young Kit and Mike, for sure. The early parts of the memoir very much remind me of reading pieces of someone's journal. Some of the beginning parts were a bit of a struggle for me, as you get bogged down in so much detail: what they ate, where they went, where they walked, who called who, etc. That was a little excruciating at times, but as I said, there was also a sweetness and tenderness to it. It just seemed like sometimes there was a little too much oversharing--details and moments that weren't necessarily relevant to the overall story. A little too much telling versus showing, especially in the first half or so of the book.

However, as it continues, it either improves or I became more used to the style. You become really caught up in Kit and Mike's relationship journey. It's painful and sad to read, but there are definitely humorous parts interspersed within as well (thank goodness). Ausiello appears to be brutally honest in his portrayal of everything--the ups and downs of their relationship, the cancer and its toll on Kit (and Mike), and more. What we're left with is a heartbreaking, poignant tale, with a reminder to truly live life to the fullest, as you really never know what comes next.

Overall, despite a slow (detailed) start, *this is a lovely tribute to Mike and Kit's love and life together.* It's heartbreaking and touching and a beautiful ode to his husband. My heart goes out to Ausiello, but after reading Kit and Mike's story, you'll be left grateful for the time the two had together. We should all be so lucky. 3.5 stars.

I received a copy of this novel from the publisher and Netgalley (thank you!) in return for an unbiased review. It is available everywhere as of 09/12/2017.

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Laura says

This is the best book I've read so far this year. It's also probably one of the best/my favourite books I've ever read in my life. I regret that I can only give it five out of five stars, probably even 10/10 would not suffice to convey how much I love this story and the manner in which Michael told it.

I never had the pleasure to meet Kit Cowan in life but through reading this story and Michael's telling of their life together, both the struggles and the joys, I feel like I did. I feel like I'm better for having read this book and I that I now have an even further expanded view of how I can - and should - approach both obstacles and triumphs. I wish that I could approach situations in my own life with the same heart and compassion and humor that Michael and Kit do.

This is a crass (far crasser than I would have expected, having followed Michael's career so far), funny, laugh-out-loud (I have to say, the cat sure trained Kit well), kick you in the gut, tearjerker, heartbreaking, REAL look at love and loss. You'll cackle and sob, indeed. Thank you, Mike. "Eh, that Kit Cowan, he had a good life."

I received an ARC copy of this via NetGalley and am voluntarily providing a review.

Jenny says

Sometimes a book seems to have an easy comparison. For example, I read Anna Kendrick and Lauren Graham's memoirs close to each other and those seemed in the same lane-- smart, funny, actresses and their experiences. In this case, Ausiello's book can be put up against Dave Holmes' memoir "Party of One." Both are (or were) entertainment writers, both are vaguely celebrities in their own right but spend a lot of time with the more famous, both write about coming out and being gay in the entertainment industry. They are not perfect comparisons, of course, as Ausiello's book is ostensibly about his partner, Kit's, untimely death of cancer. Nevertheless, spoiler alert: I think Holmes' book is much better written and more worth the time.

Given the subject matter, it is important to say that Ausiello's love for his husband is palpable throughout the book. However, like many memoirs, it suffers from a telling and not showing problem. Nearly every page, it seems, the couple are telling each other they love each other, but we rarely see any evidence of that love until Ausiello cares patiently and lovingly for him as he becomes more and more ill. All of this is moving. Prior to that, love is largely described as a physical connection only. Snuggling like puzzle pieces or struggling over sex.

However, as is often the case with a memoir, I was left wondering "so what." I don't know either of these folks, so why does their particular story matter to me? Ausiello's writing is breezy, as befits his regular gig, so this is not a book crafted of finely wrought sentences. Given that, in a memoir I'm looking for a point of connection or a larger insight into the world. There are lots of interesting roads he starts down-- what's with the Smurfs? His answer is facile. What does he want to say about dealing with body dysmorphia while surrounding himself in looks obsessed celebrity culture? There seemed more there. Why oh why, did he and Kit choose to fight it out all those long years when they often seemed so miserable?

And it often seems that the writing confuses oversharing with honesty. It's pretty misogynistic to throw the word "c*nt" around so happily. It's ableist and gross to use the phrase "morning tourettes," equating a life shaping disability with an inability to not be an asshole in the morning. Details of a sex life are just over sharing unless there's a larger purpose for sharing them (see: larger discussion of body dysmorphia that the author wants to dig into but doesn't and/or discussions of monogamy vs alternate arrangements that never

come up). Just sharing all your dirty laundry is unnecessary unless it's to a larger point. I do not think this book ever rises to the level of introspection needed for that larger point.

It is hard to review a memoir because it's someone's representation of their life, after all, and in this case a clear attempt to keep something of his husband's memory alive. But everyone has a story to tell and everyone's life experiences are important to them. If you want a wider audience for your memories, you need to help that audience find a way in or to see the world in a new way. For this reason, of the two books I'd recommend Holmes', which is better written and actively seeks out those connections.

Valerity (Val) says

One of the best books I've laughed and cried through this year. So stunningly written, as he mines the years of love they shared, the diagnosis and the final year as they faced cancer together. Funny, fierce, and heartwrenching all at once...yet still carries a positive and hopeful outlook. A very sweet and loving book told in an honest and humorous manner, as it was lived. Many thanks to NetGalley, Atria Books, and the author Michael Ausiello for providing me with a Kindle ARC for review.

Jennifer says

I was flipping between a 4 and a 5, but I honestly couldn't think of a concrete reason to dock a star. This book wouldn't necessarily be a 5 for everyone, but it worked for me. At first, I had issues with the structure (the first chapter was their first date--the second over a decade later--and I was worried it was going to skip over all that time. Never fear though, the book flashes back.) I mean obviously don't read this book if you or your spouse just got diagnosed with cancer. (Or maybe do. You should do whatever you want if you've got cancer.) But if you have some distance currently in your life between you and the subject of dying, you'll likely find this deeply moving. It's basically life lessons, in the words of a sometimes catty, pop culture-obsessed gay man whose partner had a huge tumor in his ass. Personally, that's my favorite type of tone in which to receive life lessons. (Note: to the person who said this book was offensive due to swearing? Bitch, please. It literally talks about "other four letter words" in the title.)

Lisa Wolf says

As an occasionally obsessed TV fan, I've been familiar with Michael Ausiello's writing career for years. I avidly followed his "Ausiello Report" for scoops and spoilers on my favorite shows, enjoyed his fanboy goofiness and funny interludes, his Smurf obsessions, and his super witty writing style. When I saw that he had a book coming out this fall, I naturally assumed this might be a collection of his TV writing.

Spoiler alert: It's not.

Spoiler Alert: The Hero Dies is a personal, painful, inspiring, heart-warming, and heart-breaking love story -- Ausiello's up-close memoir of the loss of his husband Kit after a short and intense battle with a devastating form of cancer.

Michael and Kit spent 13 years of their lives together, but this isn't a sugar-coated fairy-tale version of perfect love and romance. Instead, it's a warts-and-all look at a real relationship, filled with ups and downs,

anger, laughter, challenges, and almost-breakups. It's clear that Michael and Kit had an instant chemistry and loved each other deeply and passionately, but Ausiello doesn't shy away from describing the less euphoric points of their relationship as well, such as Kit's infidelities and Michael's drinking.

Kit goes from strong, healthy and vital to a cancer patient in practically the blink of an eye. It's wrenching to see Kit's discomfort as it grows into pain, to see Michael's helplessness at not being able to rescue the person he loves most in the world, and the growing realization that Kit is facing a death sentence, and quickly. And yet, there are moments of joy and beauty. Although they'd never considered marriage for themselves before, they practically turn the city upside down in a quest to get married before Kit starts chemo, and it's funny and sweet and lovely.

I can't say enough good things about this book, although I suppose I should warn readers that you'll need heaps of Kleenex at the ready. The book has a lot of humor, for a book about cancer, and Michael and Kit themselves are funny people. I loved reading about their romance, their pet names for one another, all the silly little things that make up a life, and cried myself into a messy puddle as Kit weakened and they prepared themselves for loss.

Michael and Kit clearly had something special, and I appreciate how much of himself Michael was willing to share in putting together this lovely tribute to the man he loved. It's practically a cliché to describe a book as a love letter to a person or place -- but it's just so apt in this case. *Spoiler Alert: The Hero Dies* is absolutely a love letter to Kit -- funny, sweet, and utterly romantic, and so very tragic.

I so admire Michael Ausiello's honesty and emotional openness in writing this book, and although I didn't previously know anything about him except his professional persona, I do feel invested now in wishing him a life of happiness. Kit was clearly an incredibly special person, and I'm happy to have gotten to know him through this book.

This review also posted at Bookshelf Fantasies. Review copy via NetGalley, with thanks to the publisher.

Dawn Michelle says

I am not even sure how to review this book; I literally just stopped crying from it. Like super ugly crying. I will be crying for days over this book and for Michael's loss. Days.

This is a story about life. And death. And love. It is a huge story about love. The kind of love, even with all the troubles and trials that they had [and Kit and Michael had all of those and then some] that is what all of us want in our lives. The kind of love that makes you want to die when your spouse dies but also helps you go on living when they are gone because you just have to.

I loved every second of this book, even when Kit was dying. Which sounds horrible, but Michael made him so alive in this book, I feel like I knew him just a tiny bit and that my life is better because I knew him just a tiny bit. And Michael's writing just takes you to every aspect of their lives together. And the humor [dark as it was] holds it all together. It was very bizarre to be laughing hysterically while wiping away all the snot from the ugly crying; but that is kind of how they lived their life together, so maybe it wasn't that bizarre after all.

Nidhi Jakhar says

How do you review a book that left you sobbing bucketfuls of tears, the sweep of tears that kept hitting you that you hid yourself in the loo to cry another bout and that your tears became so personal that you cried another round for intimate reasons?

And finally I rounded up the tear saga by sending a message sealing a hug, thanks and love to Michael Ausiello (which he acknowledged and replied to).

It has been such a sweet intimate book and my first experience of reading on gay love that I actually felt it so normal. I ended up feeling that I won't have any rancour if either of my sons were to turn out in pink colour. That's the power of books..they impact your thought process so subtly and yet intensely.

Love is love, in any colour or orientation. It empowers us to transcend our capacity to give. Mike was such a caregiver to the cancer-ridden Kit and his capacity to love haunts us. It transmits to us as well. It, being a true memoir, I can say Kit was one hell of a lucky guy to go from this world surrounded by so much love and empathy. He went away with every corner and space in his heart and soul suffused with enormous love and compassion.

The book reads beautifully, with doses of dark humour, laughter, beautiful private moments shared by two men in love with each other. Glad to have peeped into that life.
