



## Less

*Andrew Sean Greer*

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**Less** Andrew Sean Greer

**A breakout romantic comedy by the bestselling author of five critically acclaimed novels**

*Who says you can't run away from your problems?*

You are a failed novelist about to turn fifty. A wedding invitation arrives in the mail: your boyfriend of the past nine years is engaged to someone else. You can't say yes--it would be too awkward--and you can't say no--it would look like defeat. On your desk are a series of invitations to half-baked literary events around the world.

**QUESTION:** How do you arrange to skip town?

**ANSWER:** You accept them all.

*What would possibly go wrong?* Arthur Less will almost fall in love in Paris, almost fall to his death in Berlin, barely escape to a Moroccan ski chalet from a Saharan sandstorm, accidentally book himself as the (only) writer-in-residence at a Christian Retreat Center in Southern India, and encounter, on a desert island in the Arabian Sea, the last person on Earth he wants to face. Somewhere in there: he will turn fifty. Through it all, there is his first love. And there is his last.

Because, despite all these mishaps, missteps, misunderstandings and mistakes, *Less* is, above all, a love story.

A scintillating satire of the American abroad, a rumination on time and the human heart, a bittersweet romance of chances lost, by an author *The New York Times* has hailed as "inspired, lyrical," "elegiac," "ingenious," as well as "too sappy by half," *Less* shows a writer at the peak of his talents raising the curtain on our shared human comedy.

## Less Details

Date : Published July 18th 2017 by Lee Boudreax Books

ISBN :

Author : Andrew Sean Greer

Format : Kindle Edition 272 pages

Genre : Fiction, Lgbt, Contemporary, Humor

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## From Reader Review Less for online ebook

### Paromjit says

This is a beautifully written, lyrical, comic, often profound and moving Pulitzer winning novel, to me it often feels like a gay version of Eat, Pray, Love. A little known, gay and inconsequential writer, Arthur Less, is approaching 50 with fear, his body is displaying all the physical symptoms of getting older. In his mind, he is the first gay man to face the quandry of the aging process, he has known hardly any gay men who have lived to this age. His problems are intensified because his current amour has dropped him and he has received a wedding invitation from the love of his life, a famous celebrity poet, Robert, a man with whom he had a relationship for nine years. What to do? He just can't attend the wedding, so to distract himself he chooses to accept invites to literary events around the world in search of himself and who he is.

On his meandering travels that include India, Germany, France, Mexico, Italy, Morocco, and Japan, through which Less's colourful, exciting and jam packed personal past life is revealed and reflected upon. Less shifts from one chaotic, difficult and challenging scenario to another, jumping into adventure after adventure, encountering mishaps in his efforts to find love, fulfillment and happiness. Less is a flawed man, charming, self obsessed, so body conscious, and a fascinating central character. This is a short, brilliant and entertaining novel about identity, and although often uneven, I thoroughly enjoyed it. I particularly appreciated the wonderful and enchanting prose. Highly recommended! Many thanks to Little, Brown for an ARC.

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### Philip says

4ish stars.

Such a clever book. For the first third or so, I felt like there was something missing. Was this really deserving of the Pulitzer? (PULL-it-sir, by the way, not PEW-lit-zer, as the characters and I learn). I couldn't quite put my finger on it... Too spoony? Too magniloquent (with the use of words such as peripateticism, quaalude, and *magniloquent*)? More like too insubstantial. Funny but fluffy. As Less's journey around the world continues, however, his story becomes fuller, deeper, wiser.

One can't help but wonder how much of this book is autobiographical. There is a meta aspect throughout as the words on the pages, as related by a mysterious narrator, so often mirror Less's own writing as a novelist and his reflections on his life, while satirizing the very literary world to which he belongs. A character in the book actually wins a Pulitzer (foreshadowing?) and another warns Less never to win an award, that doing so ruins authors. While the book is decidedly a comedy, Less can only (comically) see his life as a series of tragedies. He describes his most recent novel, rejected by his publisher, as being about "a middle-aged gay man walking around San Francisco. And, you know, his ... his sorrows ..." to which a character replies "A white middle-aged American man walking around with his white middle-aged American sorrows? ... It's a little hard to feel sorry for a guy like that." Yet here we are! A book about a white middle-aged American man's sorrows has won the Pulitzer. And if I can't quite feel sorry for Arthur Less, I can sure relate to him.

To me, it's a good reminder that it's okay to make fun of myself. That by doing so, I can actually process and acknowledge my tragedies in a more meaningful way. While perhaps not as significant as Less's fear of turning 50, my apprehension about turning 30 this year is real, let me tell you. What some might view as the pinnacle of a life, I can't help thinking of as "it's all downhill from here." I don't know if I'll even be able to

enjoy my 30s when I keep thinking "I'm almost 30 which means I'm almost 40 which means my life is half over which means I'm basically dead." I'm already at the point in my life that, when it rains, instead of complaining that I can't go out and do anything, I think "this will be good for my lawn." ? Maybe, though, by seeing these thoughts written out like this I can smile, get over myself, and enjoy myself anyway. :)

Posted in Mr. Philip's Library

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### **Justin Tate says**

The writing was magnificent, the witticisms numerous, but couldn't get into the all-over-the-place story.

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### **Mackenzi says**

h o l y s h i t

loved this one.

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### **Thomas says**

*Less* follows almost fifty-year-old Arthur Less, a not-so-popular novelist whose boyfriend of the past nine years is about to marry someone else. When Less gets the wedding invite, he decides to skip town and travel all around the world to different literary events. We accompany Less as he adventures to Paris, Berlin, India, and more.

Cutting to the chase: I did not like this book. Certain elements had potential, such as Less's fear of aging and his emotions surrounding past romantic relationships. But these avenues for character growth received little exploration. Instead, Less travels around the world to avoid confronting any and all of his internal issues. Though he encounters situations during his travels that remind him of his age and his romantic woes, he does not walk away from these situations with much or any insight about himself, how he could grow, etc. I feel like I just read 272 pages of a man who feels angsty, uses his resources to travel around the world, and then gets a happy ending with little to no actual agency or self-development on his part. I say the following with some frustration but mostly confusion: I literally did not understand the point of this novel.

I also found Less such a privileged, oblivious character. He is tall, attractive, white, able-bodied, and can afford to travel. His privilege is not examined in any interesting or meaningful way. I appreciated his vulnerability about his negative emotions surrounding his age, his writing, his love life, etc. but again none of these sources of internal conflict are approached in a way that connected me to Less. I wanted to see more of his journey to address his issues and not just his travels, surface-level conversations, and thoughts about romantic relationships.

While I took pleasure in finally finishing this book I take little pleasure in writing negative reviews, so here's hoping to a better read in the future. I'm going to discuss this one at a book club tomorrow and with a close friend so maybe those conversations will shift my perspective. Either way, unfortunately I would not recommend this novel.

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### **Roxane says**

I wanted to dislike this book for petty reasons grounded in irrationality but it's quite a brilliant novel, with exceptional writing and a depth of character rarely seen in fiction. I'm also surprised I loved this book because I hate books about writers.

Less is a frustrating man who gets in his own way all too often. There were many times when I wanted him to get his head out of his ass. Also, the narration doesn't quite work until the very end and then it all makes sense so I had to go back and read certain parts. But it's fine. As a middle-aged midlist writer, Arthur Less's laments are many. He needs money. His long term not boyfriend is getting married. And so he fashions an itinerary that will have traveling the world and as he travels the world, we learn of how he comes to this moment in his life, turning fifty, alone, full of longing. There is a lot that is funny and relatable about the writing life. In the end though, this is one of the most satisfying love stories I've ever read. As I read the last few pages this morning, I found myself crying. I found myself believing that love always finds a way. I admire any book that can remind me of that in a largely cynical world.

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### **Elyse says**

#### **SHARING & REVIEWING:**

I can't believe I'm writing this review the same day I came home from surgery.... but other than a little tire - I'm feeling 'great' ....happy with what my surgeon did. After 3 surgeries last year for skin cancer - the loss of a half of a nose - a slice down my forehead- today was my first 'repair' surgery. I'm blown away - my nose 'almost' looks normal. Wow...such a 'huge' difference already. Sure - I need to heal- stitches and such - but it's a miracle what the surgeon did. Really a miracle! I may not even do the second surgery that was originally planned for the fall. I think I'm happy enough just with what the doctor did today.

People around town can stop looking at me now like 'what the f#@k happened to you? And stop telling me ...."if it were them, they would just stay home with a bag over their head".

But Paul says..."Now I won't have to continue living with the alien nose any longer".

**THANK YOU SOOOOO MUCH TO ALL MY GOODREADS FRIENDS** who watched me go through this - the support was SOOOOOOO appreciated!!!! DEEPLY APPRECIATED! I HOPE OTHERS ARE WEARING SUNBLOCK AND HATS WHEN OUT IN THE SUN!

I'll be there for any of my friends too - in any way I can - to offer support back whenever comfort is wanted! Aging is not for the weak...and many of our reading friends are aging here together dealing with different medical challenges.

Reading books bring us together - and sometimes we need to 'personally' come together'!

Many thanks to the staff at Goodreads....for the ongoing dedication in having Goodreads be a place where readers and authors want to be!

So....ABOUT "LESS", by Andrew Sean Greer.....

I met Andrew Sean Greer last year .... heard him speak when this book was first released, yet I only bought the like-new hardcopy for a \$1 from my thrift store ( interesting coincidence) a short time before it won The

Pulitzer Prize. CONGRATS TO ANDREW SEAN GREER BY THE WAY! Outstanding acknowledgment. Andrew must be flying high!

I LOVE THIS EXCERPT:

“ Arthur Less is the first homosexual ever to grow old. That is, at least, how he feels at times like these. Here, in this tub, he should be 25 or 30, a beautiful young man naked in a bathtub. Enjoying the pleasures of life. How dreadful if someone came upon naked Less today: pink to his middle, gray to his scalp, like those old double erasers for pencil and ink. He has never seen another gay man age past 50, none except Robert. He met them all at 40 or so but never saw them make it much beyond; they died of AIDS, that generation. Less’s generation often feels like the first to explore the land beyond 50. how are they meant to do it? Do you stay boy forever, and dye your hair and diet to stay lean and wear tight shirts and jeans and go out dancing until you drop dead at 80? Or do you do the opposite – – do you forswear all that, and let your hair go gray and wear elegant sweaters that cover your belly, and smile on past pleasures that will never come again? Do you marry an adopt a child? In a couple, do you each take a lover, like matching nightstands by the bed, so that sex will not vanished entirely? Or do you let sex vanish entirely, as heterosexuals do? Do you experience the relief of letting go of vanity, anxiety, desire, and pain? Do you become a Buddhist? One thing you certainly do not do. You do not take on a lover for nine years, thinking it is easy and casual, and, once he leaves you, disappear and end up alone in a hotel bathtub wondering what now”.

Author Less was a minor American author, known mostly for his connection to the Russian school of Artists, especially the poet & novelist, Robert Brownburn. His now ‘ex’ boyfriend.

Author was devastated over the break up with Robert - older than he - Pulitzer Prize Guy Genius.... Yet....looking back — living with Robert was often like living alone. Everything had to be sacrificed for the work. Plans had to be canceled, meals had to be delayed, there needed to be silence until noon, etc. Less was 2nd rate.

But now .....turning 50 with an invitation to Roberts’s wedding and a string of invitations to literary events around the world .....Less concludes the best way to avoid Roberts wedding is to accept ‘all’ the invites. Keep busy traveling.....

in Mexico, Italy (awww...countryside of autumn vineyards), Germany, ( take a young lover, Bastisn, who is arrogant, follows sports, and sneers at Literature & Art) plus Less grows a beard.

In France, Less falls under the spell of Javier. As they say their goodbyes .....Less is wishing and hoping to be asked to stay.

Off to Morocco....and a visit to a Swiss Ski lodge: more reason to feel sorry for himself..... then INDIA for more adventures at a Christian retreat ( sounds like Eat,Pray,Love).....haha!

Throughout the journey we take with Less - he taps into memories from the past. He knows so well the pleasures of youth — the dangers, the excitement, the pills, the drinking, a strangers mouth, —

—Less knows more calming pleasures too —as with Robert and his friends, the pleasures of age — the comfort and ease, of old friends, and wine & whiskey, secrets, and shared stories.

Less danced between two worlds - the wild and safe.

In each country - Less meets new challenges....while reflecting on his life.

Lots of humor - sentences to think about & feel. At times the writing was too intellectual for ‘my’ easy comfort.....

but I experienced the sheer brilliance in this bittersweet book.....  
making this priceLESS!!!

4.5

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### **Dianne says**

#### **Update - as predicted, came back and changed my rating to a 5.**

Completely endearing and moving portrait of a gay man in mid-life crisis. Forty-nine year old San Franciscan author Arthur Less has just been left by his lover of nine years and his latest book has been spurned by his publisher. His fiftieth birthday is fast approaching. Less receives a wedding invitation from his lover and is desperate to be somewhere else so he doesn't have to attend. What would any reasonable person do? Of course, book a trip around the world with stops in NYC, Mexico City, Turin, Berlin, Morocco, India and Japan. Less commences with his trip and his adventures, encounters and reminiscences about his past life and relationships make up the heart of this lovely book.

Everything about this book is gently handled - the humor, the characters, the foibles and insecurities that are Arthur Less. I loved Less in the same way that I loved Count Alexander Rostov in "A Gentleman in Moscow." The books and main characters are certainly different, but something about Less captured my heart in the same way the courtly Rostov did. Humanity and compassion shine from this novel.

Greer's writing is sublime and the narrator's tender, humorous and indulgent tone is what makes this book so charming and poignant. For some reason, I can't get my head around it that this won the Pulitzer Prize. It's so readable, so accessible, so perfectly lovely - aren't Pulitzer's usually dense and weighty tomes? Not always ("All The Light We Cannot See," for example) so don't let that scare you off.

A 4.5 for me. I may come back and give this a 5; I will certainly re-read it if only to spend more time with the charming and hapless Mr. Less.

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### **Maggie Stiefvater says**

What a soft-hearted bastard of a novel.

It's the story of a failed — failing — novelist about to turn fifty. His long-time lover is marrying someone else, and he's been invited to the wedding. To avoid the whispers and rumors that would abound, he takes the only course of action he can imagine: accepting every literary invitation he's been putting off, a journey that will take him around the globe and well away from the wedding of the man he loved. Loves.

It had me from the first page, and I'm not even precisely sure why. The prose is wonderful, to be sure. Playful, rollicking, sly, observant. The main character, the anxious and vain Arthur Less, is boyish and gentle and smart and I adore him. The narrator (whose identity I guessed with increasing hope and anticipation as

the pages went on) guides us skillfully through present events and past ones, uncovering the parts of *Less* that need to become More in order to find happiness. The settings —San Francisco, New York, France, India, Japan — are wondrously and precisely evoked. Side characters caper in with delicious specificity and purpose, both thematic and human. Is one of those aspects what I loved? Is all of them what I loved?

I actually think I loved it because of what it believes. There's a line in the book — I had to fetch it to quote it exactly — that I think is what the book says on every page:

"Just for the record: happiness is not bullshit."

That belief in happiness and love is what makes this novel a comfort read. Every character is desperately flawed and every setting has a rainy day and every relationship is complicated, but its over-arching naive and wavering pursuit of happiness is what made this book feel like something I wanted to curl up in for a long time.

I'll be rereading this one many times.

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## **Larry H says**

It's been said (in a catty way, of course) that after age 42 gay men become invisible, that no one wants an older gay man except, if they're lucky, another gay man. Andrew Sean Greer's beautifully moving but slightly uneven new novel, *Less*, deals with a man coming to terms approaching his 50th birthday, wondering if he'll ever find true love, and trying to define himself and his career. No small feat, there!

When he was in his early 20s, he was the boyfriend of Pulitzer Prize-winning poet Robert Brownburn, who was a member of the famed Russian River School of writers and artists. Even though the relationship ended after a few years, Arthur has always been defined somewhat as the former boyfriend of Robert Brownburn, even as he experienced a slight bit of renown in his own literary career. Robert will always be Arthur's first love, even though Arthur knows he frittered away the relationship as many much-younger gay men would.

As Arthur's 50th birthday approaches, he is in the midst of a crisis. His former boyfriend of nine years (this time he picked someone younger) is getting married to someone else, and Arthur has been invited to the wedding. His publisher isn't interested at all in his newest novel. And he wonders if he'll spend the rest of his life alone, unloved and unsuccessful. So he does what any self-effacing person would do: he flees the country.

But he's not running away. (Well, yes, he is.) He's pursuing a number of different literary opportunities across the globe, which will end with some time at a writer's retreat in India, where perhaps he will be able to fix what ails his novel. Along the way he travels to Mexico, Italy, Germany, France, and Morocco, plumbing the depths of his soul, looking back at the memories of relationships gone sour, and trying to figure out where he goes from here, and whether he's made the biggest mistakes of his life by simply deciding not to decide things, not to say things, not to do things.

How does a man who always seems to intrigue, always seems to provoke feelings in others, figure out his self-worth, and find the courage to act instead of waiting for things to happen to him? There are lessons to be learned in mistakes and failures, but does he want to learn those lessons? What awaits him on the other side of 50?

*Less* is an emotional, somewhat elegiacal meditation on aging, love, and one's professional and romantic legacy. It is at times poignant, at times funny, even a little ridiculous occasionally, but tremendously thought-provoking. Greer brings so much poetry and beauty to his sentences, and even if his main character is a somewhat elusive enigma, at least to the reader, his lamentations and his journey are utterly fascinating.

I enjoyed this book quite a bit. I felt as if so much of this story was so interesting, so moving, that I was a little irritated when the narrative veered into almost farcical and/or metaphysical territory a few times. In a sense you know how the story may ultimately unfold, but Greer makes you wait a really long time for the payoff, and there were a few moments I just wanted Arthur to stop moping, stop walking around with his head in the sand, and speak, or act, the way he knows he should.

I have been a huge fan of Greer's since reading his first story collection, *How It Was for Me*. While it took me a while to get into what is perhaps his most famous book, *The Confessions of Max Tivoli*, I absolutely loved his other books, *The Path of Minor Planets*, *The Story of a Marriage*, and *The Impossible Lives of Greta Wells*. He is an absolutely beautiful storyteller, and even though this book has some flaws, reading Greer's writing is like eating a fine meal or watching a beautiful movie or play—you just don't want it to end, you want to savor every minute.

NetGalley and Little, Brown and Company 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.blogspot.com>....

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### Robin says

Arthur Less is about to turn 50 and has just received an invitation to a wedding he wants to avoid at all costs. It's the wedding of Freddy, a man who had been Arthur's lover for nine years. This book documents his world travels - a mishmash of appointments across the globe planned with the express purpose of avoiding the dreaded nuptials - during which, we hope, he will achieve a sort of wisdom about his life.

He's a writer, and his latest, unfinished book is about the sorrows of a middle aged gay guy in San Francisco. Those who hear the premise are doubtful. "Who's going to feel sorry for a middle aged white guy?" they ask. "Even if he's gay?" he wants to know. "Even if he's gay," they answer.

And this is how I felt, often, reading this book. It was really hard to feel sorry for Arthur Less, a thrice published author known for his loving, lengthy relationship with a Pulitzer prize winning poet, a man who seems to have no problem attracting other men due to his innocent good looks, and who lives in relative financial stability. I sort of cringed when he ruminated ad nauseam about his 'mediocrity', incessantly comparing himself with others. What does he have to feel so bad about? He's a man of privilege, of a certain amount of success, who belongs to a network of intelligent, "it-crowd" friends who know and love him.

And yet. He's such a sad, sad guy.

Even though I was getting familiar, unpleasant flashbacks of Eat, Pray, Love while accompanying Less on his international adventures... I found myself quite touched by this story. I realised that many of us, "privileged" or not, are quite good at passing by our own happiness. We let it walk out the door, like Arthur Less did, and then we drone around in our little privileged existences, with our beautiful homes and credit

card statements that boast travel, eating in nice restaurants, attending concerts and owning the latest gadget. And none of that privilege is a salve for the aching emptiness, the useless regret of a broken heart.

Because, as Less realises, "happiness is not bullshit." It's actually *everything*.

Andrew Sean Greer's Pulitzer Prize winning novel is funny - I found myself laughing out loud at parts, especially when Less is mangling the German language. It's also poignant in terms of relationships. Less is not the only person learning about love in this book, as evidenced by the story of Robert and his ex-wife, and the story of beautiful, devastated Zohra. But unlike many award winning literary novels, this one is romantic and ends on the high, sweet note of optimism. Makes you wonder why we all can't sing that hopeful song. Who knows, maybe we can.

*"So many people will do. But once you've actually been in love, you can't live with "will do"; it's worse than living with yourself."*

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## Glenn Sumi says

### An Evening With Arthur Less (and yours truly):

*I've been writing lots of traditional reviews for work lately, so I thought I'd try to make this one fun and entertaining to write... and hopefully read. If you'll indulge me, here's a Q&A with Arthur Less, the main character of Andrew Sean Greer's Pulitzer Prize-winning novel Less.*

*First a bit of background. Less is a middle-aged, midlist novelist, who's about to turn 50, and at the beginning of the book he's just found out that Freddy, his younger lover/sorta boyfriend of the past nine years, is about to get married to another man. Rather than go to the wedding and risk humiliation (Freddy's guardian/uncle is an old literary rival of Arthur's), Less decides to accept every far-flung speaking engagement, short term academic position, awards invitation and writing assignment he's been offered recently, resulting in an impromptu trip around the world.*

*So just imagine this fictional talk is one brief stop on his world tour. But, because Less is the subject of the book, and I'm not, I'm going to have Less interview me about him. Confused? Read on.*

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Glenn Sumi: I'm here with Arthur Less, the author of several books, including his bold debut novel, *Kalipso* [polite applause] Mr. Less is also hero of Andrew Sean Greer's novel *Less*. Welcome!

### Arthur Less: Thank you! It's good to be here. I believe Toronto is mentioned in the book.

GS: Indeed it is. I must say, you're just how I imagined you! Blonde and balding, boyish, with that striking blue suit featured on the dust jacket cover. Also, just as it's pointed out in the book, you don't look a day over 35.

### AL [blushes]: Aw, thanks. But that's also just being gay in North America, don't you think?

GS: Perhaps. Also, I don't know if you realize it, but some of your actions made me literally LOL (as we say online) even when I was in public.

**AL: ... um, laughing with me though, right? Not at me?**

GS: Truthfully, it was a little of both. The section on “good” and “bad” gay writers was fantastic satire – and quite true. You were, you probably remember, once criticized for being a “bad gay writer,” i.e., one who makes his characters suffer without reward. There’s another scene, I think in Italy, where there’s a literary competition JUDGED BY HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS! When I read that detail I almost spit up my orange juice in laughter. Oh, and when you’re in Germany you speak to people in German but the author translates what you’re saying into a garbled English... such a cheap joke but it made me laugh every time.

**AL: [shoots a deadpan expression to the audience] Well, I’m glad you had a good time. Languages aren’t really my forte. So tell me, what made you pick up the book in the first place?**

GS: Oh, the Pulitzer win, of course. I also liked that it was a comic novel that actually *was* funny. I enjoy books about authors, too: neurotic but relatable. There are several scenes that are sort of just like what we’re doing now: awkwardly talking onstage. And frankly, I can’t remember the last time an openly gay writer won the Pulitzer. Was it Michael Cunningham--?

**AL: - *The Hours!* Yes! What a lovely book. In a way I felt like this was a lighter version of that. Flashing back and forth. Finding the luminous – or is it the numinous? – in the everyday. Thinking about mortality. In a way it’s a journey, just like the book I’m writing in this book...**

GS: Exactly! As one of the characters says, “All you do is write gay *Ulysses*.”

**AL: [sighs] It was Freddy who said that. [pauses] Did you like Freddy?**

GS: I did. But I also felt, early on, that he was one of the more underdeveloped things about the novel. Your relationship with him was sketched out so quickly at the beginning that I didn’t realize you felt so strongly about him. But as the book went on, and bits were filled in, I believed the relationship more.

**AL: What did you think of the narration?**

GS: It took me a while to get used to. Halfway through, I figured out what the author was doing, and became intrigued.

**AL: What about the way the author filled in my past with flashbacks?**

GS: Very nicely done, well paced. I usually find flashbacks contrived, but these felt organic. They added texture and heft to the book. The scene where you meet the great love of your life, the poet Robert Brownburn, was just lovely. And quite surprising.

**AL: Thank you. And how did you like the sections with Robert?**

GS: They were some of my favourites, especially that one devastating passage about what it’s like to live with genius. I know I will reread that section many times. Such great concrete, authentic, everyday details.

Actually, at this point, I’m wondering if you could read the passage I’m thinking about.

**AL: Certainly. [Arthur stands up and reads from the book he's in]:**

What was it like to live with genius?

Like living alone.

Like living alone with a tiger.

Everything had to be sacrificed for the work. Plans had to be canceled, meals had to be delayed; liquor had to be bought, as soon as possible, or else all poured into the sink. Money had to be rationed or spent lavishly, changing daily. The sleep schedule was the poet’s to make,

and it was as often late nights as it was early mornings. The habit was the demon pet in the house; the habit, the habit, the habit; the morning coffee and books and poetry, the silence until noon. Could he be tempted by a morning stroll? He could, he always could; it was the only addiction where the sufferer longed for anything *but* the desired; but a morning walk meant work undone, and suffering, suffering, suffering. Keep the habit, help the habit; lay out the coffee and poetry; keep the silence; smile when he walked sulkily out of his office to the bathroom. Taking nothing personally. And did you sometimes leave an art book around with a thought that it would be the key to his mind? And did you sometimes put on music that might unlock the doubt and fear? Did you love it, the rain dance every day? Only when it rained.

*[audience applauds]*

GS: Thank you! Speaking of Robert, the scene where he learns he's won the Pulitzer Prize for poetry was wonderful. Who knew that that scene would be prophetic, huh?

**AL: Yes! I don't know if the author who created me will quite get over it. Did you hear that hardcover sales have doubled since the Pulitzer win? Anyhow... did you like the few men I met in the various countries? Who was your favourite?**

GS: Oh, that conversation with Javier on the balcony of the party in Paris, on the sudden stopover before you go to Marrakech. *[a few lusty "woots!" from the audience]* I'm sure I'm not the only reader who found it very romantic.

**AL: It was quite something to be on that balcony. Did you like what the book said about love?**

GS: I did. I understood why you wanted to avoid going to Freddy's wedding. And I liked how you met all these people on your travels and how in a way they changed how you felt about your own situation. Zohra's story in Morocco just gutted me. She's the woman who turned 50 the day before you did.

**AL: [quietly, looking down] Yes, I'll never forget Zohra. [Looks up, his eyes moist] And what about my friend Lewis's story, about his husband who made a pact to leave him after ten years?**

GS: That made me cry it was so sad and beautiful.

**AL: Wow, so this book I'm in really did make you laugh and cry! You're not exaggerating?**

GS: I'm not exaggerating. It made me think of lovers and friends in my own life. It made me think about getting older, especially as a gay man. And it also made me want to travel more.

**AL: But not in an Eat, Pray, Love sort of way, right? [audience laughs nervously]**

GS: No! I was briefly worried this book would become that. And you admit at times that no one wants to read about how a privileged white middle-aged guy thinks he's suffering. But it transcended all that.

**AL: Whew! Okay, well thanks for the chat. I need to catch a plane.**

GS: Thank you. And I hope to meet you again... perhaps in a sequel?

**AL: You'll have to bug my author about that. After all the Pulitzer buzz dies down, perhaps he'll sit down to write again. In the meantime...**

GS: ... yes, yes, I'm going to look up his earlier books!

**AL: I think my author would like that!**

[polite applause from the audience as Arthur Less and his interviewee leave the stage]

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### **Lewis Weinstein says**

There is no story ... the main character is totally uninteresting and evokes no positive feelings ... the writing is competent but snarky, and also repetitive ... the tour guide information, country after country, is paper-thin and offers no particular insights

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### **Kelly (and the Book Boar) says**

Find all of my reviews at: <http://52bookminimum.blogspot.com/>

***“Just for the record: happiness is not bullshit.”***

I picked up *Less* for one reason and one reason alone . . . . .

***“You won?”***

***“It’s not Pew-lit-sir. It’s Pull-it-sir. Holy fuck, Arthur, I won.”***

Occasionally I like to prove that I don’t live on porn and murder alone and venture out. The world of award winners has generally worked out pretty well for me and, although I’m not a zealot about it, I try to squeeze in a Pulitzer, Man Booker or Edgar Award winner a couple times a year.

The story here is about Arthur Less. Quickly approaching 50 with one former partner dying and another getting married, Arthur feels he has no choice but to do one thing . . . .

Except the staying in more part. No, on the contrary Arthur will be going out more. A lot more. And all over the world. From Paris to Berlin to Morocco, Arthur will become quite the globetrotter in order to avoid facing the facts that he’s not getting any younger . . . or more successful . . . or better at relationships.

*Less* has the hardware that proves unarguably that I read it wrong. I don’t even have a valid reason, either, because the “off the top of my head” excuse why I didn’t fall over myself loving this one is that I didn’t really relate to Arthur. Obviously I can’t truly relate to all of the meth manufacturers, moonshine runners, cannibals and serial killers who manage to make their way into my cold, dead heart either, so like I said – invalid argument. I guess my main problem with poor Arthur was . . . .

***“You talk like a child. You look and act very young.” . . . “Maybe you never grew up.” Maybe he never did.***

I guess there’s no place in my life for middle-aged manchildren. It still gets 3 Stars, though, because even I couldn’t eff up and read it wronger than that ; )

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**Phrynne says**

What a fabulous, fantastic, gorgeous book! How on earth did something like this win something so serious as the Pulitzer? I am amazed.

I loved every beautifully written word. It was funny, it was clever, it was sad, it was quirky and it was totally addictive. How could you possibly not fall in love with Arthur Less? At first you conform with Arthur's opinion of himself but as the book progresses you start to realise that other people do not see him the way he sees himself.

The ending was just perfect. I read a library book which I have to take back. I will be buying myself my own copy. This is a book I need to keep on my shelf. Loved it.

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