



The Revised Fundamentals of Caregiving: A Novel

By Jonathan Evison

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In *The Revised Fundamentals of Caregiving* (releasing June 24, 2016 as a Netflix Original Film titled *The Fundamentals of Caring*, starring Paul Rudd and Selena Gomez), Jonathan Evison, author of the new novel *This Is Your Life, Harriet Chance!* and the *New York Times* bestseller *West of Here*, has crafted a novel of the heart, a story of unlikely heroes in a grand American landscape.

For Ben Benjamin, all has been lost--his wife, his family, his home, his livelihood. Hoping to find a new direction, he enrolls in a night class called The Fundamentals of Caregiving, where he will learn to take care of people with disabilities. He is instructed about professionalism, about how to keep an emotional distance between client and provider, and about the art of inserting catheters while avoiding liability. But when Ben is assigned his first client--a tyrannical nineteen-year-old boy named Trevor, who is in the advanced stages of Duchenne muscular dystrophy--he soon discovers that the endless service checklists have done nothing to prepare him for the reality of caring for a fiercely stubborn, sexually frustrated teenager who has an ax to grind with the whole world.

Over time, the relationship between Ben and Trev, which had begun with mutual misgivings, evolves into a close friendship, and the traditional boundaries between patient and caregiver begin to blur. The bond between them strengthens as they embark on a road trip to visit Trev's ailing father--a journey rerouted by a series of bizarre roadside attractions that propel them into an impulsive adventure disrupted by one birth, two arrests, a freakish dust storm, and a six-hundred-mile cat-and-mouse pursuit by a mysterious brown Buick Skylark. By the end of that journey, Trev has had his first taste of love, and Ben has found a new reason to love life.

Bursting with energy and filled with moments of absolute beauty, this big-hearted and inspired novel ponders life's terrible surprises as well as what it takes to truly care for another human being.

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The Revised Fundamentals of Caregiving: A Novel By Jonathan Evison Bibliography

- Sales Rank: #30541 in Books
- Brand: Algonquin Books
- Published on: 2013-05-07
- Released on: 2013-05-07
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 8.25" h x .81" w x 5.50" l, .65 pounds
- Binding: Paperback
- 304 pages

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

Amazon Exclusive: Essay by Jonathan Evison

"Listen to me: everything you think you know, every relationship you've ever taken for granted, every plan or possibility you've ever hatched, every conceit or endeavor you've ever concocted, can be stripped from you in an instant. Sooner or later, it will happen. So prepare yourself. Be ready not to be ready. Be ready to be brought to your knees and beaten to dust. Because no stable foundation, no act of will, no force of cautious habit will save you from this fact: nothing is indestructible."

— from *The Revised Fundamentals of Caregiving*

The weekend of my sister's sixteenth birthday, she took a road trip with some friends down to Lucerne Valley in the Mojave Desert. For two weeks prior, the trip was a source of debate around our dinner table. My old man reasoned that since she was a responsible kid, got good grades, fed her pets, and honored her curfew, she ought to be allowed to take the trip. My mother reasoned that it was a bad idea. She didn't trust the other kids. They were a scraggly bunch.

My sister took the trip. She never came home. She was killed in a freak car accident the weekend she turned sixteen years old. The incident, the specifics of which have never been explained satisfactorily by anyone, all but exploded my family. My parents divorced after twenty-five years of marriage. I lost what amounted to my primary caregiver. My oldest brother was deeply depressed for two years afterward and was really never the same in some fundamental way. To this day, my family is still feeling the shockwaves. I'm still walking around with this sister-shaped hole in my heart. After a few beers, my brother will still lament the fact that he owed her seven bucks at the time of the accident. The seven bucks had been a point of contention involving the sale of a ten-speed bike. They argued fiercely about the money up until the day she left. At fifty-seven, my brother is still trying to pay that debt.

There are holes in our lives that can never be filled--not really, not ever. And yet, we have no choice but to try to fill them. We must drive on in the face of debilitating loss, crippling guilt, overwhelming hopelessness. Because to give up is to be dead. I've lived with this idea since I was five years old.

Ben Benjamin is a character who has lost virtually everything--his wife, his family, his home, his livelihood. Broken, stripped down, stricken, and without hope, Ben is a shadow of his old self. He has been a stay-at-home dad for nearly a decade, so the job market has all but passed him by. With few options, Ben registers for a twenty-eight-hour night class called The Fundamentals of Caregiving, where, in the sweltering basement of the Abundant Life Foursquare Church, Ben learns how to insert catheters and avoid liability. He learns about professionalism and how to erect and maintain certain boundaries, how to keep physical and emotional distance between the client and the care provider. He learns that caregiving is just a job. But when Ben finds himself assigned to a tyrannical nineteen-year-old named Trev, who is in the advanced stages of Duchenne muscular dystrophy, he discovers that the endless mnemonics and service plan checklists presented in his class have done little to prepare him for the reality of caring for a fiercely stubborn, scared, sexually frustrated adolescent with an ax to grind with the world at large.

When I set out to write this novel, I didn't envision it as a road novel. I've never had a desire to write a road novel--in fact, I was very resistant to the idea. But the characters led me to the road. They left me no choice. They all but dragged me kicking and screaming to the road. It seemed Ben and Trev were always driving around in that van of Trev's, but they were never getting anywhere. They were both stuck. They needed that van to deliver them somewhere--and I guess I needed it, too. Because that's where this novel delivered me. *The Revised Fundamentals of Caregiving* is a story of total collapse, and ultimately, reconstruction. Before it is over, this calamitous journey will cover five states, resulting in one birth, two arrests, and one instance of cannibalism and including a dust storm, a hail storm, several shit storms, and a six-hundred-mile cat-and-mouse pursuit by a mysterious Buick Skylark.

Baggage is collected.

Hearts are won and lost.

Mistakes are forgiven.

Futures are realized.

This book represents nothing less than an emotional catharsis for its author. I wrote this book because I needed to. Because my sister went on a road trip thirty-nine years ago and never came back. And my family has yet to heal from this terrible fact. This novel is about the imperative of getting in that van, because you have no choice but to push yourself and drive on, and keep driving in the face of life's terrible surprises. It's about the people and the things you gather along that rough road back to humanity. And in the end, for me, *The Revised Fundamentals of Caregiving* is the van in which I finally bring my sister home.

Review

New York Times Editor's Choice

Washington Post Notable Works of Fiction for 2012

Kansas City Star Top 100 Books of 2012

Seattle Times' 25 Best Books of 2012

Editors' Pick for Amazon's Best of 2012 list

The Millions "A Year in Reading" list for 2012

"Engaging . . . The journey is reckless and wild, infused with the sad rage that makes good comedy great . . . As this carload of misfits moves east, relationships are broken and forged, and Ben recreates a kind of family. This could be horribly clichéd and yet it isn't, because Evison never bows to what we expect from happy endings." —**Jennifer Gilmore, *The New York Times Book Review***

"Evison's third and most stealthily powerful novel . . . [is] a book so poignant yet improbably funny . . . [An] adventurous story." —**Janet Maslin, *The New York Times***

"A journey back to life . . . bittersweet . . . It's moving and funny, and, my God, how refreshing it is to read a story about someone caring for a disabled person that isn't gauzed in sentimentality or bitterness." —**Ron Charles, *The Washington Post***

"Evison's prose is replete with his gifts for witty imagery and turns of phrase . . . With its extremely cinematic plot and collection of quirky scenes, the novel might remind you of Little Miss Sunshine meets Rain Man . . . *The Revised Fundamentals of Caregiving* is even-keeled, big-hearted, and very funny, and full of hope. Through Ben, missteps are made, and human foibles are exposed. But we also glimpse that distant

shore of hard-earned redemption. For that, Evison's novel is worth the voyage."—***The Boston Globe***

"An entertaining picaresque and a moving story of redemption."—***The New Yorker***

"Allow me to add my voice to the chorus of praise that has greeted *The Revised Fundamentals of Caregiving*...Grimly hilarious."—***The Wall Street Journal***

"It's a story of heartbreak and healing . . . This is a novel with a terrific sense of the relationship between comedy and tragedy." —***The Daily Beast***

"Evison has given us a salty-sweet story about absorbing those hits and taking a risk to reach beyond them. What a great ride." —***The Seattle Times***

"Evison has an easy fluidity with the dashed dreams and disappointments of characters who don't ask for pity." —***Seattle Weekly***

"The comic novel may be the hardest work of fiction to pull off well . . . *The Revised Fundamentals of Caregiving* is a showcase of what makes a good one tick: Characters just a touch disconnected from reality, a prevailing sense of life's absurdity and a handful of rude jokes . . . Evison proves that some of the best comedy emerges from lives that have jumped the rails."—***Minneapolis Star Tribune***

"A warm, funny look at recovering from tragedy."—***Milwaukee Journal Sentinel***

"A cathartic novel that will leave readers breathing a heavy sigh of pleasurable release. Its offensive at times, witty, funny, and an excellent example of modern realism . . . Evison offers readers bittersweet highs and tragic lows while illuminating all the sticky, messy passages in between. No matter what you're in the mood for, pick up this little gem. In less than 300 pages, the weight of the world will feel a little lighter on your shoulders in the aftershock of Ben's tragedy. Your prospects may seem brighter next to Trev's grim future. Your eyes will sting from laughter at the dark, unforgiving humor. You won't have any regrets."—***The Missourian***

"A zany road trip from grief to grace . . . [A] sometimes funny, sometimes slapstick, big-hearted novel."—***The Oregonian***

"Evison's brand of feel-good storytelling comes from life's trenches, where hope and humor must endure in the face of despair."—***Fort Worth Star-Telegram***

"Evison has developed the command of craft and tightness of focus necessary to animate quirky characters and outlandish set pieces."—***Philadelphia City Paper***

"I think you're going to be hearing a lot about Jonathan Evison's new novel. Reviews will mention the construction of the book (alternating time periods, brilliantly handled), the secondary characters (all vivid), the road trip (crazy and transforming), and the perfect blend of humor and sadness. One of Evison's gifts is creating characters that are easy to care about . . . It's a thought-provoking story about two men trying to do their best in a world that doesn't play fair."—***Beth Fish Reads***

"Luminously moving and very funny." —***The Rumpus***

"Smart and bittersweet and attuned to the absurdity of life -- Evison's book is the literary version of a good

grunge song.”—**LA Weekly** (“Book of the Week” selection)

“Let’s not mince words. *The Revised Fundamentals of Caregiving* is far and away the best novel Jonathan Evison has ever written . . . It’s funny, moving, and lively, the sort of novel that will appeal to avid readers and to people who only manage to read one or two books in a year. The secret, the trick to the book, is in the voice of the narrator, which feels so true that it simply can’t be denied.” —**The Stranger**

“Evison manages to find considerable humor in this plaintive story of care giving and receiving . . . A lively narrative with a poignant core and quirky, lonely characters.”—**Kirkus Review**

Review

“Jonathan Evison is a gifted raconteur with a wicked sense of humor and an unflagging empathy for humankind in all its sad, foible-filled magnificence. In *The Revised Fundamentals of Caregiving*, his myriad talents are displayed in full bloom.” —**Patrick deWitt, author of The Sisters Brothers**

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Robert Young:

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Richard Tipton:

People live in this new day time of lifestyle always try and and must have the free time or they will get lots of stress from both everyday life and work. So , whenever we ask do people have free time, we will say absolutely without a doubt. People is human not a robot. Then we ask again, what kind of activity have you got when the spare time coming to an individual of course your answer will probably unlimited right. Then ever try this one, reading textbooks. It can be your alternative with spending your spare time, often the book you have read is definitely The Revised Fundamentals of Caregiving: A Novel.

Julie Flanagan:

Playing with family in a park, coming to see the marine world or hanging out with friends is thing that usually you will have done when you have spare time, subsequently why you don’t try point that really opposite from that. A single activity that make you not experience tired but still relaxing, trilling like on roller coaster you already been ride on and with addition of information. Even you love The Revised

Fundamentals of Caregiving: A Novel, you could enjoy both. It is very good combination right, you still need to miss it? What kind of hang type is it? Oh can occur its mind hangout folks. What? Still don't understand it, oh come on its called reading friends.

Veronica Turner:

In this time globalization it is important to someone to obtain information. The information will make a professional understand the condition of the world. The healthiness of the world makes the information simpler to share. You can find a lot of personal references to get information example: internet, magazine, book, and soon. You will see that now, a lot of publisher that will print many kinds of book. The particular book that recommended to you personally is The Revised Fundamentals of Caregiving: A Novel this reserve consist a lot of the information in the condition of this world now. This book was represented so why is the world has grown up. The dialect styles that writer use to explain it is easy to understand. Typically the writer made some investigation when he makes this book. Honestly, that is why this book ideal all of you.

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