

KEN O'NEILL



*The  
Marrying  
Kind*

"Razor-sharp humor." -- Rob Byrnes, Holy Rollers

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## **The Marrying Kind** Ken O'Neill

Wedding planner Adam More has an epiphany: He has devoted all his life's energy to creating events that he and his partner Steven are forbidden by federal law for having for themselves. So Adam decides to make a change. Organizing a boycott of the wedding industry, Steven and Adam call on gay organists, hairdressers, cater-waiters, priests, and hairdressers everywhere to get out of the business and to stop going to weddings, too. In this screwball, romantic comedy both the movement they've begun and their relationship are put in jeopardy when Steven's brother proposes to Adam's sister and they must decide whether they're attending or sending regrets.

## **The Marrying Kind Details**

Date : Published June 19th 2012 by Bold Strokes Books (first published November 1st 2010)

ISBN : 9781602826700

Author : Ken O'Neill

Format : Paperback 264 pages

Genre : Romance, M M Romance, Contemporary, Humor, Lgbt, Fiction

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## From Reader Review The Marrying Kind for online ebook

### AnnaLund says

The narrator's ramblings shook me out of the narration more times than I want to remember, but when he actually managed to keep me with him? It was *hilarious*. The Romanian mother killed me dead, and living in Italy with a friend who sees the "malocchio" (bad eye) everywhere, I could see Steven in front of me—not believing it, but spitting all the same, just in case... Hilarious. Add his mother, the Romanian guilt-tripping widowed matriarch with a live ex-husband, and you're in for some serious guffaws.

The theme of marriage-rights for everyone is important, especially with the conservative backlash the world is experiencing right now (June, 2012). To know that New York now allows same-sex marriage makes this book feel all the more important. Especially the hospital scene broke my heart.

This novel, the debut of author Ken O'Neil, could have profited from one more editing run-through, as the ramblings could have had more substance. Or they could have been developed a bit more. This is the only reason I have graded it four stars.

I loved it, it was totally, completely nuts, and there is so much love in the pages that it still surrounds me. And thankfully, there is no sex, except a very small scene where they say it was nice, very nice. It cracked me up big time.

Here are some excerpts, for those of you who want to know what caught my mind's eye while reading:

*I had left him for having principles and conviction, which are the reasons one should stay with a partner. (They're right up there with funny and good in bed).*

*No arbitrary law about what it is that makes one person the family of another would ever separate them. - about the "normal" marriage of his brother.*

One passage really resounded with me, and it was the one about Constantine's funeral and the Italian Franco (Dean and Frank). (I won't quote it here, because I'd like for you to experience it for yourself). There is a whole new story right there. A period piece about gay uncles and sassy spinsters.

I wonder if Mr O'Neil would care to write that story for us, too? The topic is important, and needs to be told in a million different ways, from different eras, so that people can finally *see*. Love is love.

I was NOT asked to read this book by anyone. And I paid for it with my own money, (as I do for all the books I read, the music I listen to and the movies I watch) and I'm glad I did. Really glad.

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### Ed Davis says

This book was not my cup of tea. The main character had no backbone and completely caved into his straight siblings when they didn't even stop to consider his feelings for one second. When Adam stood up for himself what did this piece of mush do, he left him. After seven years and never a fight he leaves his partner and chooses his selfish family. I don't think I want to read anything else by this author.

I can't imagine how this book won all those awards. I would have thought gay people had more pride.

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### **Eve says**

A large part of my enjoyment of this book came from the descriptions of life in Manhattan, which I am not sure will appeal as much to a non-New Yorker. But even aside from that, this is a really good book, about two regular guys in a committed relationship and their adventures while campaigning for gay marriage (by boycotting weddings), while all around them their families are getting married. Kinda like a gay version of chick-lit - gay-lit, maybe? A lovely, light read, with off-page sex but lots of cuddling. :)

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### **Jane (PS) says**

Oh man - this is such a sweet *funny* story that you just can't go wrong with it. I don't know if Ken has written anything else, but his portrayal of the MCs ~a gay couple, their hangups, their friends' idiosyncrasies, their families, the OTT weddings - OMG it's so much fun. It cracked me up so many times.

...I now feel the need to watch the movie "Now, Voyager" with Bette Davis just to see her bond with Paul Henreid over cigarettes... LOL.

Narrated by Zach Herries - 4 stars. Great narration, nailing neurotic MC Steven.

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### **Anke says**

So - looks like I'm the only one not liking this. Sorry, book!

It was on my TBR for years now, exactly since Aug 12, 2012 and several times since then I started and stopped after a few pages. Then I chose it for my 'humorous' category of my annual challenge and let me tell you, that category is giving me problems. Seems like my humor is totally different than what most people find funny. Sigh! I have to read 8 books and this is the 3rd DNF and then there were two 2\* books.

Anyway, this is not my kind of humor, not my kind of funny and I cannot relate to any of the characters. I throw in the towel.

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### **Ken O'Neill says**

I wrote this novel so perhaps my five stars are not to be trusted. But how many books can make you laugh about inequality? I think "The Marrying Kind" could really be a catalyst for change with regard to segregated marriage laws.

I hope so, anyway.

I had this idea that if I wrote a novel that was really funny and mainstream but also had a strong POV about

equality that folks would read this book, and laugh so much that at the end they wouldn't even realize that I had convinced them that we all deserve to be equal. They would just think they had always been on the right side of history. Good idea? If you think so please buy a copy, read it, and tell your friends about it. Thanks!

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## **Preston says**

If you've read the blurb you've read the book except you haven't had the fun, romance, and excitement.

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## **Megan says**

This review was posted to Amethyst Daydreams book blog.

I found a book this weekend that had me thinking. I've been married for eight years and I regularly feel guilty about it. It always makes me feel awful that marriage has always been more about politics and less about love. In the past people married for money or land or political gains. Now people get married so they can get benefits like tax breaks or health insurance coverage. People also like to make marriage a political agenda. They like to keep some people from getting married or keep the government from accepting the marriages that some churches/states perform. It's all nonsense. Marriage should be about love. Whoever you love and however you love. Eight years ago, when I got married, my father in law was not a fan of the idea and he still isn't today but he had no way of stopping it. Not everyone is so lucky. That's what *The Marrying Kind* is all about. How we deal with this injustice and how it affects us all.

I received an e-galley of *The Marrying Kind* by Ken O'Neill from Bold Strokes Books through NetGalley. Here's the Goodreads blurb:

Adam More, a successful wedding planner, has been having nightmares featuring the Bush family and characters from *Gone with the Wind*. His partner, Steven Worth, a columnist with *The Gay New York Times*, is understandably concerned. However, everything comes to a comic point when Adam decides he can no longer promote marriage for heterosexuals until he can legally marry Steven, who, through his column, ignites a marriage boycott among the many gay florists, hairdressers, chefs, waiters, and musicians who keep the wedding industry humming. Ken O'Neill is a New York-based writer and activist whose blog ([themarryingkind.org](http://themarryingkind.org)) is devoted to marriage equality.

This is a delightful story of two people and how they react differently to the same issue in their lives. Adam and Steven can't get married even though they have lived together for a long time and are raising two cats together. That is a problem for most gay men but Adam feels it even stronger after a chance encounter with a man at one of the weddings that he planned. The man's simple statement: "it must hurt to plan all these weddings when you can't ever have one yourself" sets off a chain reaction in Adam's mind causing him to change the way he views his business. This about face in his thinking could not have come at a worse time when shortly after Adam's epiphany, his sister and Steven's brother announce that they're getting married. This throws a wrench into his marriage boycott plans. It also calls into question how the marriage question affects each of them. Should they really "take it out" on their straight friends and relatives? Should those straight people be understanding and supportive in the quest for marriage equality? These are all questions that Steven and Adam need to answer for themselves. In the end, the whole process leads to them learning more about themselves, each other and the world they live in. I loved every moment of this book because

while it has a political purpose, it does not read as a book that is trying to force you into anything (believe me, my father in law loves that Focus on the Family stuff so I know what that looks and sounds like). Steven tells a charming story of an event in his life that left him changed. The reader comes away from the book wondering about the same things that Steven did as he went through this. This is really worth reading.

You can find out more about author Ken O'Neill and his movement for Marriage Equality on his blog. You can also click [here](#) to find *The Marrying Kind* on Goodreads. I really hope that you'll give this book a chance when it releases on June 19th. *The Marrying Kind* earns 4 Fairies for a lovely story about one couple's journey through activism.

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### **Tami says**

An enjoyable read. What made this stand out was the 1st person narrator, Steven. His voice, his personality, his quirks, his emotions - he really made this a great read.

It was a fun read, although partly a bit angsty, but I just loved the characters in this book - with one small exception, Adam, Steven's boyfriend, who remained a bit pale for me.

It was very well written also - so this author will go in the auto-buy column.

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### **Lady\*M says**

4.5 stars

I was initially attracted to this book because the blurb reminded me of the movie *Wedding Wars* (the similarities remain superficial), because this is the author's first book and the theme of the book could not be more relevant. I am glad to say that the book surpassed my every expectation.

This is not a romance, but it is romantic and it is a book about love – love between partners and family love. While the theme is serious, the narrative tone is light and humorous which actually helped the message of the book – it never felt preachy and the serious parts had much more impact. The story is also heartwarming and touching. You will laugh and, if you are anything like me, you will sniffle a bit. The characters are fantastic – three-dimensional and believable. You *know* these people.

The story is set in 2007, before New York legalized gay marriage. The narrator is Steven Worth, a 33-year-old neurotic, self-deprecating, dilatory columnist for the Gay New York Times. He is in a six-year relationship with Adam More, a hardworking wedding planner. He enjoys their happy domesticity and likes cleaning and cooking for his man. The men are in love, content, surrounded by supportive friends and family. They even played matchmakers for their siblings – Steven's brother Peter and Adam's sister Amanda.

But, Adam lately suffers from bizarre nightmares; he is distracted and rarely smiles. Steven is concerned until Adam comes home one day to announce that he is giving up his wedding business. He'd had enough of planning other people's weddings. Until he and Steven can legally wed, he will not plan or attend another wedding or buy wedding gifts. Steven uses his column to invite other GLBT people in the business to join the boycott and the response is overwhelming. But then Peter and Amanda announce their wedding and

things get complicated. Hilarity and heartbreak ensue.

At first, Steven and Adam enjoy the attention and the free time they can spend together, but soon they have to face the consequences: people getting fired, Adam's declining business, turbulent relations with family and friends. Steven has more and more trouble to reconcile the cause with family obligations and Adam's behavior turns obsessive, so much so that he starts hurting their mutual friends. These things start affecting their relationship and even threaten to destroy it.

There are so many things that worked in this novel that this little review cannot possibly cover them all. I adored Steven's voice and the way his memories of his childhood and relationship with Adam gave us almost a complete picture of their lives. He is an endearingly neurotic, honest, witty narrator with a few lingering hang-ups from his youth and complex, but loving relationships with his family. His love for Adam clearly jumped off the pages. Also, from Onda, Steven's Romanian-American mother, to Brad, his first boyfriend and boss, from Amanda, Adam's sister, to Gail, Steven's colleague and best friend, O'Neill's characterization is fantastic. As I said at the beginning, you know these people or, at least, you know people *like* them: a middle aged man obsessed with weight and youth like Brad or a relative – both exasperating and charming like Onda. Trust me, I live a border away from Romania and, yes, people like her do exist. In addition, humor is such a cultural and personal affair that it's tricky for an author to reach a wide audience successfully. I am happy to say that O'Neill's humor worked perfectly for me, even though I live on a different continent.

I have to admit that I couldn't see how the author would resolve the central conflict. The little things – little hurts and snubs – pile up until both men have to ask themselves: Where do you draw the line when facing injustice? Do you stay true to the cause that is essential to your life or to your family which was always supportive to you? What are you willing to sacrifice? Obviously, something's got to give. While the cynic in me wanted to protest (feebly) that things rarely work out so well in real life, that people are rarely that understanding, the romantic in me thought that O'Neill chose the perfect ending for his book and his characters. I loved it! Especially after one particularly moving scene towards the end of the book that will surely tug at your heartstrings and underline the painful injustice gay couples suffer every day.

I have one niggle that kept me from giving the book the highest rating. While I never doubted men's feelings, I found Adam's transformation from how Steven initially described him to obsessive activist a bit hard to swallow. Perhaps his point of view would have helped there, but then *The Marrying Kind* wouldn't be the same book. Still, I would have liked to know what was happening in his head. I suspect that this book will get even better on the second (and third) reading though, so don't be surprised if you come back one day in the near future to find the rating raised.

At first, I wanted to include a few quotes in my review to illustrate the humor and wonderful little touches that made this book so appealing (like references to the men's favorite movies, etc.), but I decided against it so you can experience the complexity of the book yourself. *The Marrying Kind* is a humorous and heartfelt story that speaks about serious issues in a very accessible way. I can't imagine a better way to spend a few hours. And, if you want to help marriage equality – give or lend this story to someone. I am looking forward Mr. O'Neill's next book.

Highly, highly recommended.

Written for Reviews by Jessewave.

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## Nathan Burgoine says

Before I say anything else about this book I'm going to start with the thing people go to book reviews to learn: should you buy this book? Absolutely. Positively. Fabulously. Yes. Call your indy. Download the audiobook. Pick up a copy from the publisher's website. Go do that. I'll wait right here.

Okay?

Okay.

I was lucky enough to hear Ken O'Neill speak at the Saints & Sinners Literary Festival, on a panel about humour, and so I was - I thought - quite prepared to chuckle my way through this book. Ken is funny - he has this delivery that had me barking out laughter. You know the kind of laugh where you weren't expecting it at all and you end up being super loud and everyone stares? That kind. I was not prepared at all, and those moments of perfect delivery are seeded throughout *The Marrying Kind* and I was bark-laughing all over the place. I may have scared some neighbours while walking the dog, and maybe one or two people at the grocery store. It happens.

The narrative has what appears to be a simple and funny set-up: a writer for a small gay free newspaper writes an article after his gay wedding-planner partner decides that since gays can't marry, there should be a queer-wide ban on all things wedding. No more florists, dress designers, caterers, dress clerks - nothing. And the movement gains real traction. And then the writer's brother and the wedding-planner's sister get engaged, and the struggle the two began comes even closer to home: what do you support? Your own rights, or your own family?

I say that the narrative *appears* simple and funny - it is more than this. O'Neill manages to do something very clever (and incredibly difficult) by taking something that really isn't funny - *the fight for equality* - and takes one instance of the existing inequality - *gay marriage* - and uses it to great effect to really paint a very accessible picture of what it's like for us queer folk. And he does this while making you bark-laugh throughout. The seriousness is there, and indeed sometimes the laughter comes from the clash between those who don't really realize what it is the couple is fighting for in the first place and the queer folk trying really hard not to slap them upside the head with a clue, but mostly it's the incredibly honest characters who make this novel so wonderful. They're neurotic and self-centred and mistake-prone and hysterical (in both senses of the word) and so darn charming that you're rooting for pretty much everyone - especially the couple, who may find themselves divided by one wedding while they take a stand for... well... their right to weddings.

I could go on and on, and if we end up in the same room together, I probably will (you were warned) but grab this. Now.

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## MsMiz (Tina) says

4.5 - I am perilously close to giving this a 5 star. I was laughing so hard at 1am on the plane I was disruptive.

This was good, real good. Be back for a real review when I have had more than 3 hours of sleep.

## Mandi Schreiner says

I accepted this review request with a little trepidation. First of all, this is more a romantic fiction than the standard romances I read. The author described the book more as ‘chick-lit but with two gay men’ in his review request, so I was intrigued. He also said, “that if enough people read it my sweet little book might have an impact on the state of equality in this country.” I’m am 100% for marriage equality in this country, but I also didn’t want to be preached at for the few hours I sat to read. Fortunately, Ken O’Neill puts plenty of humor and quirky characters in his engaging story, that while his message is loud and clear, it still reads as a really fun book. I also need to note that this book is set in the year 2007, before gay marriage was legal in New York.

Adam More and Steven Worth have been happily together for six years. Steven is a writer for The Gay New York Times, a weekly free circular. Let’s just say, Steven shows up to work late and leaves early, often leaving his boss Brad and his other work partner, Gail nervous if his column will ever get done. But they are good friends of his, and put up with his neurotic behavior. Steven has a lot of quiriness to him, for example, when Steven gets upset, he can’t speak. His throat literally closes up. So instead of being able to yell at someone, he has to resort to silently stewing and mouthing his words. He is also great at pouting. All of this combined makes for some amusing scenes in this book.

Adam is a very successful wedding planner (having once been on The View, his claim to fame) and works very hard owning his business. He is the much more laid back of the two, leaving the theatrics to Steven. Obviously they both attend a lot of weddings a year, not only clients, but many family members as well. Steven comes from a strong Romanian family, and as he tells this story, he often flashes back to very humorous stories of his childhood and his Romanian mother. Steven has a brother Peter, who designs wedding cakes and is also seriously dating Adam’s sister, Amanda. Remember these two, they play an important role in a minute.

It is during one of these weddings that Adam has meticulously planned, that he crumbles. When the DJ asks for all the married couples to join together on the dance floor, Adam looks at Steven with despair. This feeling has been building up inside of Adam for some time. The injustice of not being allowed to get married, yet planning and going to hundreds of wedding a year, is all just too much. So he quits and announces he will not plan another wedding until he can get married too. That also includes going to weddings, buying wedding gifts etc.

Steven is proud of this statement and stands behind Adam 100%, even writing a column about it for The Gay New York Times. The column explodes, and it becomes a movement of sorts across the city. All is fine and dandy, until Amanda and Peter announce their engagement.

While The Marrying Kind definitely has conflict with the fact that Adam and Steven have decided to protest all weddings and the two closest people to them, Amanda and Peter have decided to get married, there is much more to this story. This is really the life story of Steven. We learn how he met Adam, how much his crazy, Romanian mother shaped his life, and how he has met his warm, funny friends who make this story so appealing. The author gives us some really silly moments, enough that make you laugh, but not so over the top that it doesn’t seem realistic. From one of his cousin’s French garden themed weddings where she made all the bridesmaid’s where powdered wigs and gowns 250 years out of style, or his boss Brad who is obsessed with pretty and young catering waiters. He sets up these scenes as Steven is telling the story that are so humorous, yet never weigh down the story and the direction it is going.

There are some poignant moments as well. Adam becomes so obsessed with his protest of marriage, he starts to lose focus on his family. Steven gets caught in the middle, wanting to attend the marriage of the brother he is so close to, but also wanting to support his lover in his cause. I really like how it all plays out in the end.

I really enjoy this author's voice. As I said at the beginning, this isn't your standard boy meets boy and falls in love romance book, but it is definitely romantic. I'll even go as far to say there is a renewed HEA at the end that will make you smile.

Rating: B

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## Cole Riann says

Review posted at The Armchair Reader.

### **This is a book that I want everyone I know to read!**

I've been eyeing this book for a while, especially after seeing some great reviews. I think I was most intrigued because this book is about a different side of gay marriage that I've read before. From the very first page, I was in love with Steven's voice.

It all starts when Steven starts to notice Adam changing. They've been partners for about 7 years, and they generally seem like the perfect couple -- they have two children (well, cats), they watch old movies together, and they are similar and different in all the right ways -- essentially, they're quietly compatible. Steven's nature is to let Adam's changes slide until he starts to get freaked out that something really, no *really* serious is going on. Then, Adam decides to take action. He's tired of planning weddings for people when he can't have a "real" one of his own.

They decide to do what they can to spread their message. Steven uses his column with *The Gay New York Times* to spread their message and implore those who agree to boycott the wedding industry. Unfortunately, at about the same time as the column goes live, Adam's sister and Steven's brother who have been dating for a while now decide to get married. What do they do? The problems really start to escalate when people catch onto their message, driving a huge wedge between their families.

Told through Steven's publicly quiet demeanor but inner snarky voice, *The Marrying Kind* doesn't let up from the moment the story starts. Steven's narration switches consistently from present quick paced wit to memory, history, and cultural references, all offering some insight to the present. His voice is so funny that I laughed out loud throughout the entire book and was marking passages on my Kindle over and over.

The activism in this novel might be the spark, the catalyst that sets everything in motion and the undercurrent that keeps it moving forward. It also holds a huge message for readers. That message is achieved, though, through the shifting familial ties and family dysfunction that laces them all together. It's a bit like looking at two sides of a coin -- when the shit hits the fan, everyone is facing everyone else's ugly sides. It's the way that families are, and I really have to give this author props, especially for such a resounding job in his first novel. I always admire authors who can truly juggle a large cast, without dropping anyone and continually interlacing their actions and emotions throughout the group. This author does that really well here, usually offering Steven as the observer, quietly narrating (with his own hilarious commentary) as it all happens. The fact that the story never loses sight of the fact that they're a family, a truly mashed up American family, takes the story from admirable to heartwarming.

There is really a lot to recommend about this romantic comedy. New York City is almost a second character and I love when authors really get that right. The voice of Steven is pivotal to the story. Despite bringing all the charm and quirky insight to the story, the events could have turned the tone a bit depressing in another character's point of view. Instead, Steven is constantly avoiding the real issues with anything he can think of until he truly has to face them. The secondary characters really sparkle, especially in ensemble settings.

I really think this is a book that people will love and I hope that more people hear about it. I know I'll be doing my best to recommend it to everyone I know!

I love Ken O'Neill's review of his book!

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### **rameau says**

As I was browsing through NetGalley I happened on this book. I glanced at the cover, read the blurb, and thought maybe not. Then I looked at the author's name, and thought maybe yes.

A M/M romance written by a man? Definitely, yes.

Skimming through the blurb I thought this book would be more about Adam, the wedding planner who quits his job in protest until he can *legally* marry his partner Steven, but as it turns out it's not. It's more about Steven, the columnist for The Gay New York Times, with a Romanian family and more than his share of neuroses. He tells the story of how their wedding boycott started and how others embraced it. He shows how the wedding plans of their siblings created conflict not only between them and their families but between Adam and Steven and their cats too.

*The Marrying Kind* is written in first person limited there's only one way to win me as a reader over once that writing choice has been made: The narrator's voice. I'll either love it, tolerate it, or hate it. While I can't claim to be ready to drop down on one knee and profess my undying love, neither can I dismiss *O'Neill's* writing as merely tolerable.

Despite the slow start I found myself swept away even by the long paragraphs flashing back to Steven's childhood and other significant moments of his life that usually annoy me with all that telling going on. And then there were the moments of showing. I might have awed a couple of times, but I was usually giggling, cackling, or guffawing loud enough to scare the unsuspecting passes-by depending on the moment. Most of my status updates are direct quotes from those moments I once again scared the neighbours.

The book is filled with classical film references some of which I recognised and others didn't. Luckily, the author provides a short summary for the relevant parts. One thing the book isn't filled with is erotica. The plot doesn't dissolve into pure porn and there is exactly one reference to a sex scene and it's vague. That fact almost makes me want to give this book an extra star.

Though, I've shelved this book under romance, it's more than that. The story is set in New York in 2007 when gay marriage was yet not legal in the state. It's about fighting what's right and making your family see it. It's about the reality of a stable relationship and accepting your partner as is. It's about showing why equal rights should be equal.

I couldn't recommend this book more if I tried.

*I received an Advanced Readers Copy of this book from the publisher through NetGalley.*

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