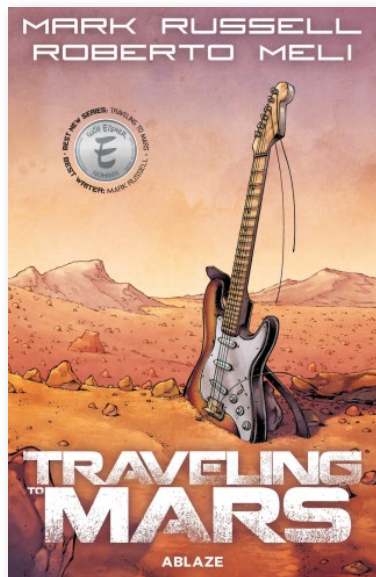


READER'S GUIDE

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Traveling to Mars (Ablaze)



Dive into this multi-layered story about a loser living in obscurity who becomes the most famous man in the universe, and explore dark humor, redemption (or lack thereof), and what it means to be human.

CREATORS: Mark Russell and Roberto Meli

ABOUT: *Traveling to Mars* tells the story of former pet store manager Roy Livingston, the first human to ever set foot on Mars. Roy was chosen for this unlikely mission for one simple reason: he is terminally ill and therefore has no expectation of returning. Roy is joined on his mission to Mars by Leopold and Albert, two Mars rovers equipped with artificial intelligence, who look upon the dying pet store manager as a sort of god.... A riveting story of planetary exploration and of finding meaning in your final days.

“

“When the United Nations decrees that since no human has yet to set foot on Mars, the first person to do so shall be granted right of ownership, executives from the Eazy Beef corporation hatch a plan to recruit someone disposable they can compel to embark upon a one-way mission to claim the planet—and its resources—on their behalf. So it comes to pass that Roy Livingston blasts off on a long, solitary voyage to save the human race—and help Eazy Beef become the most powerful organization on Earth. VERDICT Russell and Meli deliver a sharply observed, often poignant reflection on humanity’s search for meaning in this unforgettable tragicomedy.” —*Library Journal*, 2024



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Redemption is one of the main themes of this story. Did you find Roy to be a redeemable character at the beginning? Did your assessment of him change later on? Why or why not?
2. *Traveling to Mars* invites readers to ask themselves questions like, would you give up your life to save the human race? If you chose to do so, how would you spend the rest of the time you had left to live?
3. The story contains a lot of satire about society, politics, and more. What are a few examples that stood out to you? Did you find them interesting or funny, or were they distracting?
4. What is “humanity” when you’re isolated away from it? Is it your memories and nostalgic items, or can it be experienced through interactions with AI, robots, and video chats?
5. What do you think happens after the end of the story for humanity? For the AI?

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