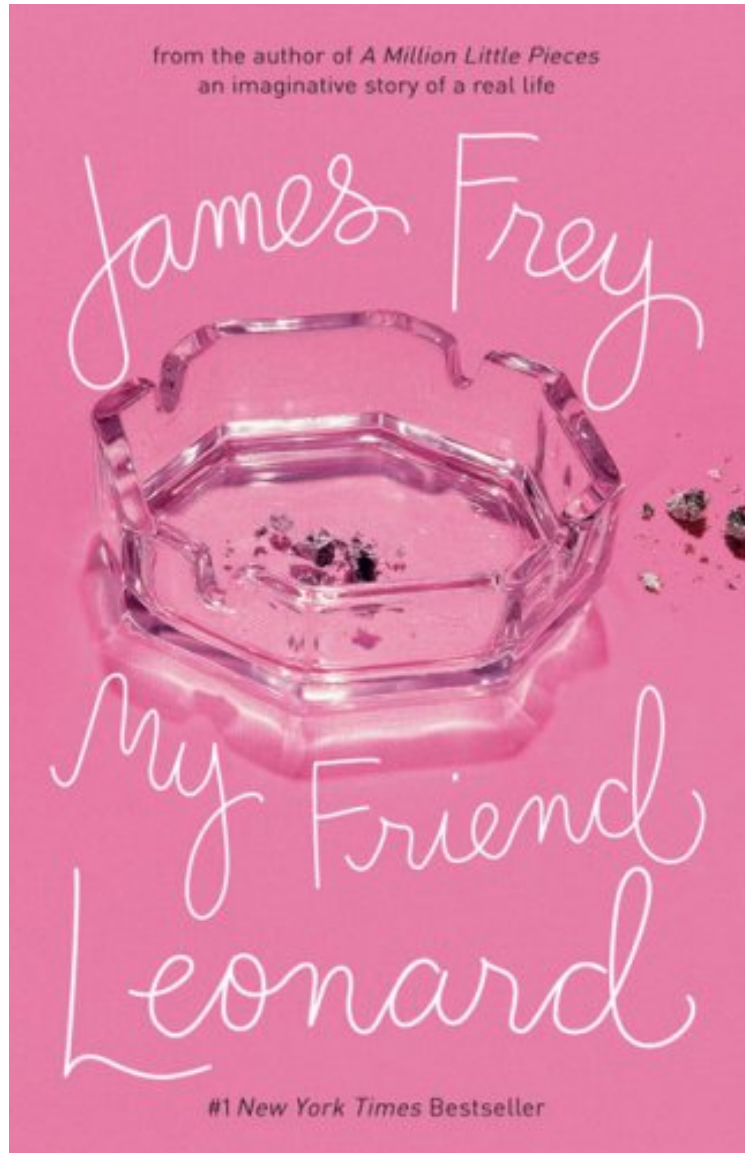


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My Friend Leonard

James Frey

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#32592 in Books Riverhead Trade 2006-05 Original language: English PDF # 1 7.94 x .87 x 5.151, .72 #File Name: 1594481954416 pages Great product! | File size: 34.Mb

James Frey : My Friend Leonard before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised My Friend Leonard:

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Every bit as lovely as AMLP; Frey is a truly talented author! By Josh Gaines Having now read three of James Frey's four published works (not counting that weird pseudonym-series about the X-Men kids or whatever they are), I have come to consider myself a solidified fan. I care not what he made up or exaggerated in the controversial best-seller A Million Little Pieces, because that's still a damn good book, and his

talent for minimalist prose is hard to ignore. My Friend Leonard is a 'kind-of' follow-up novel, picking up shortly after where A Million Little Pieces left off to find James Frey writing in the first person about a somewhat-fictionalized version of himself. It begins with Frey in jail for a brief period following his completion of drug and alcohol rehab, then getting out of jail and receiving some horrific news (this news is actually revealed in the epilogue of AMLP, but further detail is given in this narrative). In the aftermath of an event that severely rattles James's recently-free-from-jail existence, he comes dangerously close to undoing everything he accomplished in rehab by dealing with extreme temptation to drink again (which would inevitably lead to harder substances). This battle with the harsh echoes of Frey's past addiction are prominent in the first half of the story, and he even keeps a sealed bottle of cheap wine with him at all times as a reminder to not drink; a defiant expression of great willpower to refuse alcohol, even though it is available to him every moment. Before long, Leonard is introduced: a charming, handsome, mysteriously wealthy fifty-something whom James had met and befriended while they were in rehab together. Leonard seeks Frey out and expresses a desire to 'adopt' him in a way; to look out for James and care for him in a father-like relationship. Mind you, Frey is jobless and completely broke upon leaving jail, meanwhile fighting grief and teetering on the edge of falling back into addiction. Leonard has a particular fondness for James, as well as the means to provide for him, so their relationship is taken to a new level which changes James's life in some big ways. Leonard even takes to calling James 'My son' for the remainder of the book, and while Frey finds this somewhat silly and strange, he is thankful to have such a generous friend in a dark time. James makes his way through several ultra low-end jobs, including one as a bouncer at a dive bar. Eventually he is offered a position by Leonard, a position that is very loose and undefined, even a bit shady. James earns a great deal of money by running 'errands' for Leonard, though he spends very little of it and does not count his wealth as much. This description so far probably sounds very simple and rather uninteresting. The narrative is simple, but not in a boring or pointless way. It is, at the heart, the story of a man unfolding and coming to a place where he is finally taking care of himself, growing up, and finding joy in places other than self-destruction. This comes through great pain and loss, but the redemptive quality is thus all the more sweet. This is also the story of a deep and sacred friendship, one that mirrors the best father/son scenario one could imagine. James Frey's writing is loose and minimalist in the sense that he intentionally excludes most punctuation, save periods and commas, and also utilizes multiple run-on sentences. While these two qualities may sound like simply the bad habits of a lazy writer, they are executed so well that it ends up giving the piece a very stark, human-thought-process sort of realism. When things get intense or very sad and the character smashes four or five sentences into one mad dash, the severity of the moment is felt because that's the way our minds tend to blur everything together under stress. At other points his dialogue is defined by beautiful, subtle honesty, and it is through the conversations in the book (including the ones going on in James's head) that really bring out the true attributes of each character. My Friend Leonard was an easy read and a poetic delight. The story is plain in subject, but rich in character, delicate observation, and authentic interactions. Like everything I've read from Frey, there is great humor in this story, as well as loss and sadness that are gripping around your heart to rip it violently out of your chest. Again, this is how life is, is it not? If you've not read A Million Little Pieces, I would recommend being introduced to Frey's work that way, though it is not necessary material to enjoy My Friend Leonard as a stand-alone. Either way, I would highly recommend any and all of his books to any reader with an appreciation for real people going through real circumstances interlaced with lovely prose and keen observation. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Couldnt put it down By Sarbear***** SPOILER ALERT***** Love this book even more than a million pieces! The reason for 4 /5 stars is because he married the neighbor girl! He didn't even explain or go into detail about how and when. Other than that it was perfect. I do feel bad for his wife though because if she reads this she will read some pretty awful stuff about past gfs 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. James Frey's perfect second book after "Million Little Pieces" By Diane Heine James Frey books are my favorites. I love A Million Little Pieces first, then this after. Both are amazing books. I love his writing style and I do not care what's true and what's not but he tells the heart and soul of an addict. He shows the tough life of trying to overcome addiction.

Perhaps the most unconventional and literally breathtaking father-son story you'll ever read, My Friend Leonard pulls you immediately and deeply into a relationship as unusual as it is inspiring. The father figure is Leonard, the high-living, recovering coke addict "West Coast Director of a large Italian-American finance firm" (read: mobster) who helped to keep James Frey clean in A Million Little Pieces. The son is, of course, James, damaged perhaps beyond repair by years of crack and alcohol addiction-and by more than a few cruel tricks of fate. James embarks on his post-rehab existence in Chicago emotionally devastated, broke, and afraid to get close to other people. But then Leonard comes back into his life, and everything changes. Leonard offers his "son" lucrative if illegal and slightly dangerous employment. He teaches James to enjoy life, sober, for the first time. He instructs him in the art of "living boldly," pushes him to pursue his passion for writing, and provides a watchful and supportive veil of protection under which James can get his life together. Both Leonard's and James's careers flourish but then Leonard vanishes. When the reasons behind his mysterious absence are revealed, the book opens up in unexpected emotional ways. My Friend Leonard showcases a brilliant and energetic young writer rising to important new challenges displaying surprising

warmth, humor, and maturity without losing his intensity. This book proves that one of the most provocative literary voices of his generation is also one of the most emphatically human.

.com In the bold and heartbreaking *My Friend Leonard*, James Frey picks up the story of his extraordinary life pretty much where things left off in his breakout bestseller and .com Best Book of 2003, *A Million Little Pieces*, the fierce, in-your-face memoir about Frey's kamikaze run of self-destruction and his days in rehab. Fresh from a stint in jail from pre-rehab-related charges ("On my first day in jail, a three hundred pound man named Porterhouse hit me in the back of the head with a metal tray."), clean-living Frey returns to Chicago and gets sucker-punched with a cruel blow that will leave readers ducking for cover in anticipation of the blinding bender that's sure to come. But then the titular Leonard, the larger-than-life Vegas mobster ("West Coast Director of a large Italian finance firm") whom James befriended in rehab, steps into the story and serves equal parts unlikely life coach, guardian angel, and father figure for the grief-stricken author, adopting him as his "son" and schooling him in the fine art of "living boldly": Be not bold, be f-cking BOLD. Every time you meet someone, make a f-cking impression. Make them think you're the hottest shit in the world. Make them think they're gonna lose their job if they don't give you one. Look 'em in the eye, and never look away. Be confident and calm, be f-cking bold. Hurricane Leonard storms into James's life, showering his young charge with multi-course feasts at steakhouses and Italian restaurants, courtside seats at Bulls' games, Cuban cigars, and an elaborate Super Bowl party in Los Angeles, all the while doling out wisdom on life and love and motivating James to stick to his burgeoning writing career. James even has a brief stint as an employee of Leonard's, though occupational hazards--like having a nine millimeter shoved in his face--prove too much for the novice bag man (though he does make enough to invest his earnings in a Picasso drawing). When Leonard drops out of sight for an extended period, his absence leaves readers aching to hear the familiar refrain of "My Son!" just one more time. Frey sticks to the taut, staccato style that shot through *A Million Little Pieces* with such raw electricity. Surprisingly, the tone feels equally at home with this book's focus on friendship and extreme loyalty, and works to intensify the always-looming, adrenaline-rush threat of violence and the lure of the Fury that courses like a riptide throughout the book. Ultimately, it's a sense of hope, and humor even, that prevails and makes *My Friend Leonard* a stand-alone success. Despite his shady pedigree, you'll long to have a friend like Leonard just a phone call away. --Brad Thomas Parsons

James Frey's List of Books You Should Read

Paris Spleen
Tropic of Cancer
The Great Santini

See more recommendations from James Frey

.com's Significant Seven

James Frey graciously agreed to answer the questions we like to ask every author: the .com Significant Seven.

Q: What book has had the most significant impact on your life? A: Tao te Ching by Lao Tsu. Completely changed how I think, behave, live my life. Nothing else comes close.

Q: You are stranded on a desert island with only one book, one CD, and one DVD--what are they? A: The book would be the Tao te Ching, the CD would be some compilation of love songs from the 70s and 80s, and the DVD would be highlights from the history of the Cleveland Browns.

Q: What is the worst lie you've ever told? A: No way I can answer that.

Q: Describe the perfect writing environment. A: I've been working at the same desk since I started writing. It's old and beaten-up and black. The rest of my workroom is empty, except for some crazy sh-- on the wall in front of me: pictures of people I admire, reproductions of artwork I dig, sayings that motivate me, things like--bare your soul, be bold, page a day motherfu--er page a day. I listen to music while I work, have a pile of nicotine gum and a couple cans of diet coke. My dogs are usually a couple feet away from me. I've always worked this way, probably always will.

Q: If you could write your own epitaph, what would it say? A: "Loved, lost, laughed, left."

Q: Who is the one person living or dead that you would like to have dinner with? A: Winston Churchill

Q: If you could have one superpower, what would it be? A: Immortality.