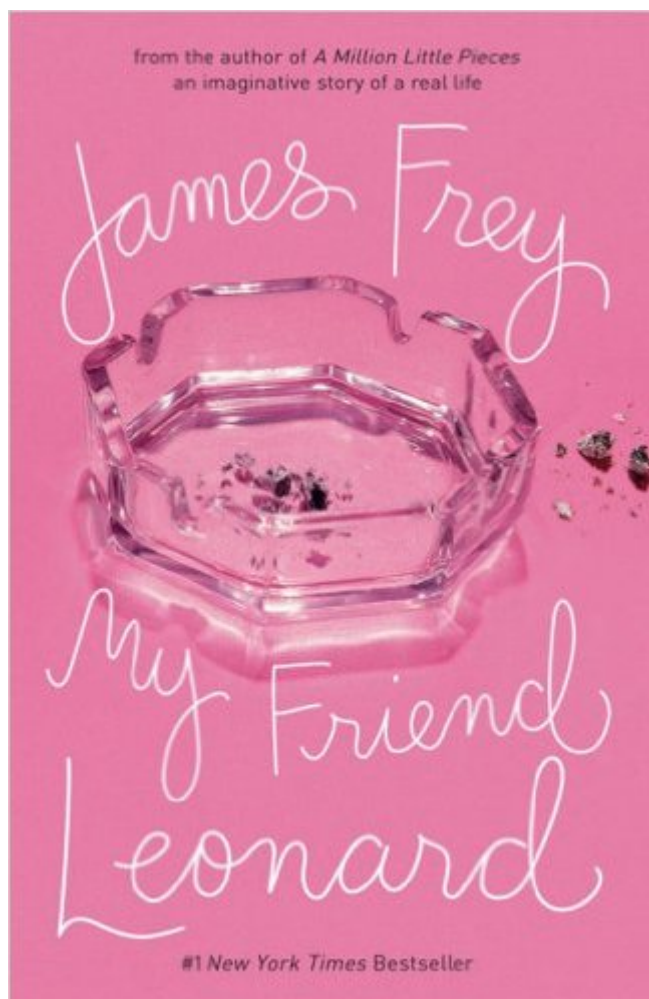


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My Friend Leonard



Synopsis

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.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I know the book and it's predecessor are all a big heap of lies, but if you approach it as strictly fiction, there's no denying the guy's a really great writer. Frey's frenetic style is the same as in "...Pieces", and although it's not the brutal foray into addiction recovery, it still manages to be both compelling and fast paced, as he pieces his life together after rehab and continues forging his relationship with gangster Leonard. Moralizing about integrity and honesty aside, I'll be interested to see what Frey produces next regardless of whether it's in the fiction, bio, or big fat liar section

A sad thing happens somewhere in the middle of this book: you learn that James Frey is a screenwriter and a producer and a director and you begin to question almost every sentence. Did it happen? Or does it simply make for a good story? Like others, I found the ending to be completely contrived--perhaps real, but related in a way that stinks of Hollywood. I put the book down and wished I had stopped at A Million Little Pieces, which was devastatingly brilliant whether contrived or not.

Like many others, I found out about James Frey through Oprah and her book club. I read A Million Little Pieces quickly and intensely. I didn't question it at the time. I just wanted to finish it and see what happened to all the interesting characters. I immediately bought the follow-up and had it delivered with the 2 day option. I couldn't wait for the book to arrive. Then, I started thinking more about AMLP and wondering how true some of the parts might be, like the part where they have the boxing match and the authorities leave and they are allowed to bet and eat as much as they want from a catered company. I started to realize there might be some over-elaboration from Frey. Maybe he made some of it up, maybe a lot more than some of it. Then MFL arrives and I read it quickly. It lends itself to being read quickly because it is so repetitive. I agree with other reviews that say his style works much better as an addict than as a person who is distanced from that addiction. This style becomes difficult and tedious. I tire of it I take a break from reading I care less about what happens to the characters get a cold tasty cola. Skip a few pages. The writing becomes a parody of itself at times. It worked before but it doesn't in this book. In the "real world" Leonard becomes a much less believable character to me. Snapper is one dimensional at best. I lose interest in his loves he can't get it up with his beautiful new girlfriend he won't tell her why he still misses Lilly cries buys flowers cries. We hug. We separate. We order steak, creamed spinach and a nice cold tasty cola. OK, you get it. I'm disappointed I hoped for better I feel like it was made up makes the first book less believable stop now stop stop.

If you read Frey's first book then you must read this! After a Million Little Pieces, I had tons of questions I wanted answered. Why did Lilly do it? What was prison like? Is the fury still there? This book answers all of those questions and tells the unique and fascinating story of Frey's life after rehab. The ending is wonderful and brings closure to his story and all of the questions. Highly, highly, highly recommended.

Frey got those anecdotes the no-risk way: he stole them from a real druggie/criminal author. A much better and more honest one, a guy named Eddie Little-specifically, Frey looted Little's great debut novel, *Another Day in Paradise*. Little wrote a column called "Outlaw L.A." that ran when Frey was living in LA writing bad movies (eg *Loving A Fool*). I think Ruth's hunch was right: Frey, like the thief and conman he is, read Little's column, then his book, and started stealing. Naturally, he cut the key element of Little's books: the unhappy endings. The fake transformations suckers demand. Another lie, those transformations; people live and die as unvaryingly as insects. Frey himself illustrates this perfectly. He was a yuppie schemer from birth, a trust-fund bum with a roof rat's adaptive, though repellent traits: a rat cunning and lack of shame. Since Frey knows nothing about drugs and cares nothing for truth, he opts for the most lurid, criminal version of druggie life. He knows you pious hypocrites love that stuff. So he stole Little's stories, carefully leaving out all the good parts. See, that's the key: y'all like Frey not despite his weakness as a writer but because of it. Compare his stories with Little's and you'll see this. Little generates horror and triumph without resorting to tearjerking; Frey zooms to the weepy scenes, too ignorant to fake the details he doesn't know and too cynical to care about filling in his crude narrative. Compare outcomes: Little paid for his knowledge of junkie-dom and died a junkie's death; Frey stole Little's scars, tears and knowledge, skipped the weird stuff and sold you a cut-and-paste tale of tears ending with redemption, a hymn with a lot of curse words to cut the treacly taste.

My Friend Leonard is an amazing book. I read the entire book within two days, and about three sittings. James Frey has a great writing style. The pacing of the book is frenetic, fast, and chaotic. All that being said, I can't give this book a high rating. I have no idea how much of this book is even real. It has been proven that the beginning, where Frey spends 3 months in jail, is a total fabrication. A fabrication that basically the entire book is based off of. I can't even truly believe that Leonard is a real person. Some part of me believes, but the other part of me is saying, "If he lied about this, why not about that?" Frey is currently making millions of dollars off of this book and its predecessor. That makes me sick. The fact is, if this was not supposed to be a "true" story, its chances of being

published would diminish almost entirely. If you want to look at the even bigger picture, if A Million Little Pieces was exposed as the untruth it was before publishing, the publisher would have dropped it. I gave A Million Little Pieces 4 stars due to the fact that I thought it was a good book. I can't do that this time. I can't endorse something that is entirely fabricated. I loved reading My Friend Leonard, I just don't love that James Frey takes us all for fools who will believe anything we read.

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