PDF | My Friend Leonard

by James Frey
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.
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 Amazon.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-loomiing, 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

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**James Frey's List of Books You Should Read**

- *Paris Spleen*
- *Tropic of Cancer*
- *The Great Santini*

See more recommendations from James Frey

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**Amazon.com's Significant Seven**

*James Frey graciously agreed to answer the questions we like to ask every author: the Amazon.com Significant Seven.*
Q: What book has had the most significant impact on your life?

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 70’s and 80’s, 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.

**Product Description**

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