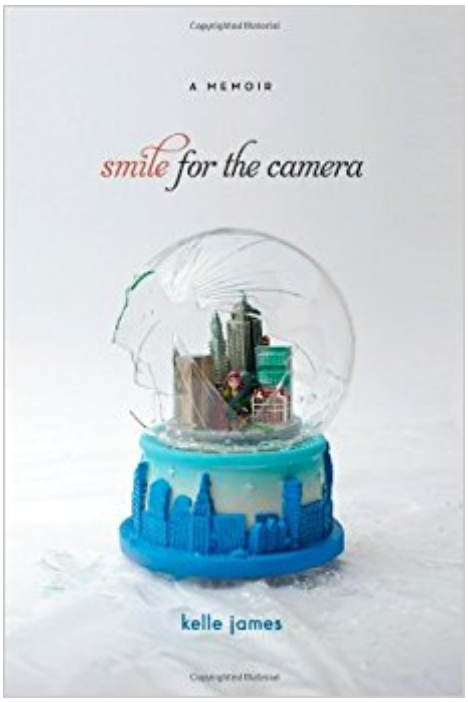
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Smile For The Camera: A Memoir



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Synopsis

Kelle James left an abusive home at the age of sixteen and went to the best place she could imagine: New York City. She had big plans of becoming a model, but within a week she was homeless and broke. What follows is her exceptional story of trying to make it on her own with nothing to her name and no one to trust. She encounters a string of people who take advantage of her youth and beauty, endures many disappointments and rejections, and has a surprising connection to an infamous murder trial. This sparse narrative of a girl who loses herself before finding her way is not only utterly compellingÃ¢â ¬â •itÃ¢â ¬â„¢s entirely true.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Gr 9 UpÃ¢â ¬â œIn 1978, James left her Maryland farm and abusive father to become a model in New York City. She lived at the Barbizon Hotel for Women for a few days and then was basically homeless. She and her scrappy, similarly aspiring friends squat in various unpleasant and unsafe places. She was hit on by all manner of disgusting men. James's writing is understated, even simplistic. She tells the story of her younger self as if she weren't very bright. The narrative flashes back to her childhood abuse so awkwardly there should be flashback theme music and a dissolving screen. James's depiction of the underbelly and excesses of pre-Guiliani New York is fascinatingÃ¢â ¬â œshe even saw children in cages at Studio 54. Unfortunately, that's the highpoint of the whole story. The action never engages. Life moved along slowly. Sure, things got worse then marginally better for the struggling model. And sure she had an abusive father. Both seem strangely diffuse, thoughÃ¢â ¬â œas if James holds the pain at arm's length. Lead interested

girls to Jeannette Walls's excruciating and beautiful Glass Castle (Scribner, 2005) instead.Ã¢â ¬â œJohanna Lewis, New York Public Library. (c) Copyright 2010. Library Journals LLC, a wholly owned subsidiary of Media Source, Inc. No redistribution permitted.

A tough but naive 16-year-old country girl flees a brutal, disturbed father to try for a modeling career in the Big Apple. In this episodic memoir, James recalls her early experiences: living on a $3-per-day budget in the back room of an agency; sneaking into a cheap hotel to use the communal shower; looking for work on perpetually blistered feet; making tight women friends but often feeling Ã¢â ¬Å"like IÃ¢â ¬â„¢m catnip to every borderline pedophile in ManhattanÃ¢â ¬Â•; losing her virginity to an older man she comes to despise; and, ultimately, making enough doing ad work to get an apartment (roach infested, but still) of her own. She also becomes something of a witness to history, as she gains a replacement father figure in Buddy Jacobson, a secretive but sociable landlord who was convicted (wrongly, as she plainly believes) of a Mob-style hit on his ex-girlfriendÃ¢â ¬â„¢s fiancÃƒÂ©. Readers will learn more about the seamy underside of late 1970s New York than the actual ins and outs of modeling, but James delivers healthy doses of humor and poignancy in fluent present-tense prose. Grades 9-12. --John Peters

This book is amazing in many ways. It is inspiring, funny and thrilling. It shows how someone can really have a wonderful life that started out horribly. It has this great stranger than fiction vibe, and while I don't often like historical books, this one has all the funny and exciting parts of fiction. It is a little depressing, which I think improves it, but if you prefer happy stories, move on. However, it is non-fiction. That means alot of things seem poorly or choppily written, not because of bad writing, but because often LIFE seems poorly written. Read this if you want a book:That's inspiringA little depressingRated R, for sureExcitingFunnyHistoricalIs about the 70'sNew YorkAbusePsychologyFriendshipJoyFamilyIndependenceDon't read this ifYou don't read at at least a 7th grade levelYou are very sensitiveYou are looking for a book about modeling

There is never a dull moment in this stunning memoir of the life of a wannabe model/actress in New York in the late 1970's.Kelle James escapes her home of neglect, corporal punishment, and verbal abuse at the tender age of sixteen to seek a brighter future in the Big Apple.Her beauty is a blessing, as well as a curse as she navigates the strange city on her own until a colorful cast of characters joins her on her journey.Kelle writes with humor, humility, audacity, and heart. She's the heroine you laugh with, cry for, but can't help cheer for as she not only survives life in the big city,

but ultimately conquers it with tenacity and grace.I read this book in one sitting. I attempted to put it down to prolong my enjoyment, but Kelle jumped off the page and into my heart.I highly recommend this book to any young person longing to fulfill their passion in a big city, as well as anyone who came of age in the 1970's who remembers the carefree, (and often cringe-worthy) era of disco, drugs, and unsafe sex."Smile For The Camera" was consistently compelling until the very last page.I only hope that Kelle James honors us with more of her engaging prose.

Have never heard of Kelle James, so was anxious to see what she had to say - and say it she did!Honest, brave, forthright with her memoir, but beyond that - Ms James is a first-rate writer, and I surmise, a first-time author. (I guess that is why I had never heard of her.)I certainly hope we will hear from her again. There's always room on my shelf for a talented writer like Kelle James.Tom Kennedy

AMAZING I absolutely loved it

I love memoirs and this was pretty good. James moves to New York at a young age to escape her abusive father, and she includes flashbacks to her childhood. If reading about physical and verbal abuse bothers you, don't buy this book.

This was a well written, quick summer read for me. I enjoy connecting with the author & her struggles and finding a relation with her hardships that she endured aspiring for her dreams. As many others, I am hoping for a second book to see where life has taken this strong author.

I highly recommend this beautiful memoir. I found it to be deeply impactful, so very human, touching, honest and brilliantly written.

i bought the book for my english class but i ended up enjoying it. i would recommend it to others.

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