



The Lone Pilgrim

Laurie Colwin

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This collection of stories about love and privacy is serious , funny, tender, and alive with the elegance and spirit that characterize Laurie Colwin's work. In these stories, the reader moves among young men and women: pianists, historians, book illustrators, architects; women who are composed and inimitably sassy; and men who are magnetic, adventurous in love, or fiendishly elusive. They are people who are experiencing, often for the first time, the starting, enriching, and maddening complications of adult life.

The Lone Pilgrim Details

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Author : Laurie Colwin

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From Reader Review The Lone Pilgrim for online ebook

Kit says

Laurie Colwin was one of my early sources of information about how the adult world worked. As soon as you pick up one of her books it's obvious that she's someone who knows things. I started reading her books about the same time she started writing them and I read everything she wrote. Re-reading *The Lone Pilgrim* recently was bittersweet. It reminded me of how simply and perfectly she wrote and it made me sad all over again that she died early. She'd be the perfect person to help me make sense of the rest of life.

Jules says

Luminously written, with wisdom and humor coming from every page, often in lovely turn of phrase. Not every story hit me so perfectly but most were like little gems you could hold up to the light, that sparkle with different colors as you look from a slightly different angle. A couple of favorite lines, though there were so many:

"We domestic sensualists live in a state of longing, no matter how comfortable our own places are."
(Predating and predicting the era of Nancy Meyers-style movies, IMO.)

"Woe to those who get what they desire. Fulfillment leaves an empty space where your old self used to be, the self that pines and broods and reflects. You furnish a dream house in your imagination, but how startling and final when that dream house is your own address."

I can't wait to read more of hers.

Tricia says

Excellent collection of short stories on a common theme: intelligent people navigating adult relationships and responsibilities. Sounds mundane, but Colwin has a gift of nailing external and internal dialogue.

My favorite of the bunch is "Saint Anthony of the Desert."

The opening line: "Haphazardness, as a condition of life, has its usefulness but is of fixed duration."

"My education was as hapless as my finances. As I conducted it, it suited me for nothing. I had been a cheerful student with a short but intense attention span, waiting for some subject to commit itself to me. Since none did, I floated from course to course and ended up unhirable.

No one seemed to have a job for someone whose qualifications included a love of American poetry, an imperfect understanding of astronomy, and a fascination with but by no means a firm grasp of the principles of cultural anthropology."

P. says

I couldn't get used to the fact that these were relatively happy stories. Colwin mainly works with telling and not showing, but when she puts in details they are very good. Because of this, the story that I'll probably remember the most is the one about the pothead wife of a professor, because it had the most dialogue.

Jeanette "Astute Crabbist" says

As soon as I finished this collection I wanted to go right back to the beginning and read it all over again. So I did. That's about the best endorsement I can think of for any book. Every one of the stories has something to offer in terms of humor and understated insight into human relationships. If you've ever known any potheads, you absolutely *must* read "The Achieve of, the Mastery of the Thing." It's the most perfect representation you'll ever find of the happy, harmless, dedicated dope smoker.

Laurie Colwin was an extraordinary, unpretentious, original voice who was taken from us far too soon. Her work slips into obscurity while contemporary authors who write rubbish are handed the Pulitzer Prize. Could just 'bout break your heart if you let it.

Second reading completed May 24, 2011

Annie says

SORT OF MAD THAT I SLEPT ON LAURIE COLWIN FOR SO LONG

JoAnn/QuAppelle says

I have no idea how I missed this wonderful book of stories by an author whom I adore. In fact, I missed all three of her books of stories. The other two are on their way to me in the mail. I am sure I will devour them just as I devoured this one!

Colwin takes ordinary people and turns their stories into such interesting pieces. Her stories are all complete, and left me satisfied, the mark of a good short story writer.

Julie says

Typically, I don't like books of short stories. I did enjoy The Lone Pilgrim though, perhaps because the stories had several common themes, ie: New York City, falling in love, Love, Academic environments, which created a thread of similarity between the variety of characters and situations in the different stories.

I'm not sure why the book is called the Lone Pilgrim for in all the stories the main character(s) end up in some kind of relationship and thus are not really alone. That being said this is not a book for those coming out of a relationship or dealing with infidelity. Only read this if you are in a good place regarding love and it's consequences!

Pattie says

"Once upon a time, I was Professor Thorne Speizer's stoned wife..." Another classic first line, from one of the stories in Laurie Colwin's little jewelbox of short stories. About young people beginning to live on their own, I read it and loved it when I was young myself. Funny and sweet without being saccharine.

Nina says

" 'I came over here to claim you, if that's possible.' When I looked at him, I realized that I had never wanted anyone so much in my life, so I claimed him, too." pg 96

Laurie Colwin just gives everyone who reads her work unrealistic expectations about love, and yet I can't help but acknowledge it is still something lovely and worth looking for.

Katie H. says

I've been depressed since Laurie Colwin died tragically young. I discovered her when I came across *Goodbye Without Leaving* in an airport God knows where and from then on I couldn't get enough of her work. There's something about her voice. Hard to define but she writes about what it's like to be single and it felt more than familiar.

Laurie gave shape to the ordinary, to people you might glance at in passing but whose lives have tremendous meaning and challenges you will never be aware of. Reading her work I felt that she understood a wide variety of people and empathized with each one. She's written novels and collections of short stories; they all have a similar tone but this one holds up over the years as my all-time favorite book about being youthful, restless and alone.

David says

It must take real skill to write a collection of love stories which (mostly) end happily and for them not to be overly sentimental or cloying, but Laurie Colwin makes it look effortless in these astute, intelligent and exquisitely written tales. Despite the 1970s New York and Boston settings, Colwin has (as I think has been noted before) much in common with Jane Austen, including her generosity of spirit and her wit, though Austen of course never wrote any hilarious stories about potheads! Anyway, on the basis of this book Colwin goes straight on to my select but ever-growing list of authors by whom I Must Read Everything (which sadly isn't that much - five novels and three collections - due to her untimely death in 1992).

Amelia says

"The Achieve of, the Mastery of the Thing", is the best stoner housewife, faculty spouse short story ever.

Thomas says

These are beautifully written short stories, though mostly lacking in plot - most of them are languid character sketches of intelligent New England women giving themselves permission to fall in love. You can imagine the reality show equivalent would be the opposite of "Real Housewives" - how about "Lifestyles of the Bored and Brilliant"? I'm gonna pitch that!

Karen says

A beautifully written collection of short stories from one of my favorite writers. Many deal with love and love affairs, but each has a slightly different twist to it. The overall mood is somewhat somber - Colwin clearly thought love was a serious business - but then there's a story like "The Achieve of, The Mastery of the Thing," which is completely different and quite hilarious.

I was also interested in the last story, "Family Happiness," which Colwin later expanded into a novel. It was interesting to see its origins, remember phrases and descriptions that made their way to the finished novel, and see what had changed.
