



Prairie Tale: A Memoir

Melissa Gilbert

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A FASCINATING, HEARTBREAKING, AND ULTIMATELY UPLIFTING TALE OF SELF-DISCOVERY FROM THE BELOVED ACTRESS WHO EARNED A PERMANENT PLACE IN THE HEARTS OF MILLIONS WHEN SHE WAS JUST A CHILD

To fans of the hugely successful television series *Little House on the Prairie*, Melissa Gilbert grew up in a fantasy world with a larger-than-life father, friends and family she could count on, and plenty of animals to play with. Children across the country dreamed of the Ingallsâ€™ idyllic lifeâ€”and so did Melissa.

With candor and humor, the cherished actress traces her complicated journey from buck-toothed Laura "Halfpint" Ingalls to Hollywood starlet, wife, and mother. She partied with the Brat Pack, dated heartthrobs like Rob Lowe and bad boys like Billy Idol, and began a self-destructive pattern of addiction and codependence. She eventually realized that her career on television had earned her popularity, admiration, and love from everyone but herself.

Through hard work, tenacity, sobriety, and the blessings of a solid marriage, Melissa has accepted her many different identities and learned to laugh, cry, and forgive in new ways. Women everywhere may have idolized her charming life on *Little House on the Prairie*, but Melissaâ€™s own unexpectedly honest, imperfect, and down-to-earth story is an inspiration.

Prairie Tale: A Memoir Details

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From Reader Review *Prairie Tale: A Memoir* for online ebook

Michael Payne says

June 19, 2010: Within days of reading Melissa Sue Anderson's recent attempt at writing, I dove into Melissa Gilbert's memoir out of curiosity. I had been completely disappointed with the first Melissa's work that, I must admit, I was slightly hesitant to even begin another look inside the world of a Little House cast member. Surprisingly, by Chapter 3, I was hooked! And, before long, I found myself completely immersed in a truly well-written autobiography. At one point, hearing the telephone ringing and knowing I had to get up to answer, I reluctantly put the book down and said, "This is a memoir!!!"

Unlike the first Melissa's extremely boring recap of every Little House scene ever filmed, Melissa Gilbert truly welcomed readers into her life. She was candid. She was shockingly and brutally honest, and she appeared genuine. I came to understand why Melissa #1 didn't have the family-type relationships with her castmates like Miss Half-Pint did - she simply wasn't open to it. She is so guarded and private that even her "memoir" was simply a detailed outline of each episode of the long-running series. After reading Melissa #1's book, I can honestly say, I haven't a clue who she is, where she comes from, or what her life was like on the Little House set. In reading Mrs. Boxleitner's "Prairie Tales," I laughed, smiled, felt tears well up (her final moment with Michael Landon was brutal to read), and I came to terms with my own demons (my relationship with alcohol is not a good one - we really need to come to terms with our relationship and simply decide to part ways).

All in all, *Prairie Tales* is a great read - especially if you grew up watching the series. I must say, initially, it was a bit shocking to discover "Laura Ingalls" had a sailor's tongue, a love of cigarettes and slept with quite a few of Hollywood's bachelors. But, it doesn't take long before you come to love Melissa Gilbert and separate her from the character she portrayed so brilliantly. While reading, I often found myself cheering for her, praying for her - and, above all else, respecting her for her work ethic, her commitment to her husband and family and for her overall desire to make her mark in life.

With summer now in our midst, grab this book as you head out on a vacation. Or, as you lie in your bed or couch in the wee hours of the night. I spent many nights watching Little House reruns and quickly diving into this book and, I must say, it was well worth it. Where Melissa #1 completely disappoints, Madame SAG President clearly ccores!! In five years, as I do all my favorites, I'm going to read this again!

Carolyn says

I purchased this book because I am a huge fan of Little House on the Prairie and thought Melissa Gilbert did an awesome job playing the character of Laura Ingalls Wilder. My mother introduced me to the series when I was about 7 or 8 years old.

I have to admit that I was a little disappointed that Melissa Gilbert felt a need to use so much profanity

throughout the book. It was really hard for me to read through most of the chapters because of the profanity. I enjoyed the last few chapters because they were profanity free.

On the other hand, I think this is a book that proves celebrities have difficulties and make wrong choices just like everyone else. However, I wished she would have talked in detail about what she learned from her bad decisions, rather than concentrate so much on name dropping and her relationship with Rob.

I also would have liked for her to discuss, in greater detail, her role on Little House and how she interacted with the other actors and actresses. Afterall, that was the reason why I had purchased the book in the first place.

Rekha says

If you're going to write a celebrity tell-all, this is how it's done, people. The ingredients: a starlet who is born into a show business family and can tell anecdotes about meeting the likes of Groucho Marx and Ann-Margret before turning 10. Also, anecdotes about an affair with Danny Sugerman and Billy Idol doesn't hurt. Throw in a long-term tumultuous relationship with Rob Lowe? Yes, please. Sprinkle with vignettes where one of the guys from the John Hughes Brat Pack makes out with Liza Minnelli (I won't spoil it by telling you who) and a tryst between John Cusack and another 80s star is revealed, and then top it off by a description of a post-9/11 visit from Karl Rove to talk about how the entertainment industry can fight terrorism, and you have WON ME OVER. Nice one, Half Pint.

Virginia Messina says

Celebrity autobiographies are almost always fun but sometimes so unsatisfying. It often turns out that the celebrity in question isn't nearly as interesting as the people you know in real life, and that's the case with this book. And if you're looking for a warm and cozy peek behind the scenes of Little House, then skip this book for sure. Despite the misleading title, there isn't a whole lot here about the TV series. In fact, I doubt I'll ever look at sweet little pigtailed Laura the same after reading about Melissa's romp around Hollywood. If she's to be believed, every single actor she ever met was in love with her (although she slept with only about three-quarters of them). There is lots of very candid Hollywood gossip plus lots of parties, lots of drugs. At least Melissa's chatty tone makes this a quick read. And her success in overcoming a very bad problem with alcohol is admirable. Overall, though, I could have lived without this book.

Rhonda says

As a long-time viewer of the Little House series, I was excited to read this book. After reading it, I found the title to be misleading. If you are looking for an actual memoir of her work on Little House, you're not going to find it here. There were few references to the actual Little House set and much more focus on Melissa Gilbert's personal life and the multitude of celebrities with whom she, her parents, or grandparents associated.

As an autobiography, it wasn't bad, but there were way too many names dropped and it really started to get irritating. It seems like Melissa Gilbert feels the need to include the name of every celebrity she's ever met,

worked with or waved to on the street.

That said, it would have been more honest and appropriate to market the book under a different title, instead of capitalizing on consumers who are actually interested in the real "Prairie Tale". I doubt that this book would have been purchased for me (or that I would have read it) had it been titled "Melissa Gilbert: The People I Know, the Men Who Treated Me Badly, and the Number of Times I Drank."

Carmen Marie says

I zoomed through Gilbert's memoir, but I have some complicated feelings about it. Her memoir is extremely well-written and paced well, but I happened to be reading this when I heard the news about Robin Williams's tragic death earlier this week. It seems that Hollywood is always teeming with tragedy. I'm no stranger to the celebrity memoir and the dark side of living a Hollywood life. I knew that I wouldn't really be shocked by the real Melissa and I'd never confuse her for her character, Laura. She only played Laura Ingalls on TV.

I grew up watching *Little House on the Prairie* (See my review on *The Wilder Life*) and although I cringed every time the show departed from the books' story line in any way (and that was most of the time), I was still a fan of the show. I remember, even as a young girl, having difficulty with how Michael Landon portrayed Pa as some type of super hero savior. I was shocked to discover that Michael Landon had a legendary temper on the set. The show was steeped in melodrama, but I embraced Melissa Gilbert as the plucky Laura Ingalls and watched her grow up on TV just like everybody else did. The thing is, at that time, even though I knew she wasn't Laura, I had a hard time watching her in anything else. I didn't want to see her wearing modern clothes, preferring her prairie skirts and sunbonnets. I suspect it was difficult for audiences to separate Melissa from Laura and Laura from Melissa even when she'd obviously had outgrown both the show and the character. To this day, I'm not really familiar with any of her other work other than *The Miracle Worker*. I did, however, get to see Melissa Gilbert play Caroline Ingalls in the *Little House Musical* in Denver a few years ago and I remember thinking that she had transitioned from Laura to Caroline (Ma) Ingalls very nicely.

Her life is both complicated and exhausting though. Although Gilbert never really broke into feature work, she had a non-stop schedule making movie-of-the-week films. She lived life in the fast lane and she's nothing less than open and candid about her life in Hollywood. *It makes me wonder what she held back.*

After *Little House*, her life accelerated and she ended up living in the Hollywood fast lane. She and Rob Lowe had an on-again-off-again complicated relationship for six years. She was very well-connected in the insular world of Hollywood as well. At first, I thought there was some serious name-dropping, but I soon realized that it's just the way life is in Hollywood. She had access to lots of cocaine. She dated tons of actors, had flings with most of them, all while trying to keep some type of equilibrium in her life. She struggled with her self-esteem and her looks opting for both a nose job and breast augmentation. Her marriage to Bo Brinkman was doomed from the beginning and her subsequent marriage to Bruce Boxleitner, despite writing that it was solid, seemed on a shaky foundation at best. (I realized that this memoir was published in 2009. I was right about that shaky foundation. Although she ends her memoir on a positive note writing that her life is in a good place especially her marriage, since the publication of *Prairie Tale*, she's now divorced again and now married to Timothy Busfield.)

It's not easy being a performer. So much of one's identity is wrapped up in the characters they play and there's that facade and veneer they portray to the world. Behind the scenes, there lurks the often dark

moments of insecurity, impermanence, and fleeting fame.

Earlier this year, I read a biography of River Phoenix (Again, see my review of *Last Night at the Viper Room*) and even though Gilbert and Phoenix don't appear to have much in common, their fast paced crazy tilt-a-whirl lives intersect with some similar experiences. Life just moves too fast for them to gain any kind of foothold on reality.

Melissa Gilbert offered herself, warts and all, knowing full well that her readers would come away disappointed that she wasn't really Half-Pint. I think she hoped that her fans would understand her in a new light and see her as fully three-dimensional human. Although I found her memoir poignant at times, it was sad to see her seem so lost for so long while making questionable choices for her life. I read this quickly, but I do think that it was a little too long in places and some of her own melodrama could have been streamlined better.

Jennifer says

If you have been a fan of Melissa Gilbert, and you'd like to continue to be a fan, don't read this book. It's disappointing. Way too much information is revealed. The language in the book is horrible. Just unnecessary. The name dropping that goes on is beyond ridiculous. Even though adopted at birth, she comes from a very well-connected Hollywood family, and after reading this book, I would struggle to name five Hollywood actors she didn't mention. Ironically, as cute as she was, and as pretty as she turned out to be, she never seemed to be happy with herself, and still isn't. I would recommend that she continue therapy to get rid of those demons, and maybe shift her focus from the past to the events of today. I'd also recommend that she continue counseling for her marriage with Bruce Boxleitner. The marriage doesn't seem to be on any more stable ground than any of her other relationships. I'm not sure the money she received for writing this book was worth everything she decided to share as well as the change in perception many fans will have. After reading this, I'm not sure you can be in Hollywood, and come out unscathed.

David says

Chatty memoir of an actress best known for her work on *Little House on the Prairie* when she was a child. Some interesting gossip about her active love life including long relationship with (and broken engagement from) Rob Lowe, and blended family with her second husband, the actor Bruce Boxleitner. Eventful family (her father was married 13 times; her husband had a stalker who tried to break them up by intercepting author's phone calls and taping bits in which she revealed to friends an "emotional affair" with costar.....) and personal (infidelity, addictions, etc.) life.

Acknowledgements suggest there was a ghostwriter, and I fault the pro for not chopping 150 pages or so out of this version. Surprising amount of pointless name-dropping (Merv Griffin was a family friend, Groucho Marx knew my grandfather, Kiefer Sutherland told my stepsons he had always been in love with me, when I was SAG president I rode in a car with ex-President Bill Clinton and he said "you're the only one of us who is a real President now" ha ha -- one after another after another not really going anywhere as a story). For someone like me with hardly any connection to the entertainment industry it's understandable that even a trivial sighting/interaction would come up a lot (have I told you about the time I saw Howie Mandel at baggage claim at an airport?), but I would have thought that someone who's been a professional actress for

decades would be over this by now.

Sharon says

This book was not really what I expected. I was hoping for more relating to the Little House experience, the interaction between characters both on and off camera. Melissa Gilbert says very little about any of the characters, except for Michael Landon.

While the book was interesting, maybe a better title would have been *Prairie Tail* because she spent an enormous amount of time writing about who she and others had been in and out of bed with. There is a lot of name-dropping, which is expected for a celebrity memoir. She has been in the business for a long time and knows a lot of celebrities, so it would stand to reason the book would have lots of celebrity names in it, but sometimes it reads like a *National Enquirer*. I'm sure all the people she wrote about are cringing at some of the antics she wrote about.

I was shattered to learn some things about her. She campaigned against drugs with Nancy Reagan and then went on to drink, smoke pot, take qualudes, and use cocaine. She hopped in and out of bed with co-stars and one-night stands faster than Laura could put on a sunbonnet. She spent a lot of the book complaining about how bad her childhood was because she wasn't allowed to have junk food and order expensive room service and drive fast cars.

Reading this book makes me very glad I was never in show business and have never had to be around such shallow people. No morals, no inspiration. It makes me sad to know that she has the power to influence, to do great things and she has never recognized that.

So, if you are looking for a book to read with your young daughters to give them the inside look on what it was like for Melissa Gilbert to play on *Little House*, skip this book.

Candice says

I'll try to make a long story short. We now have "cable" tv and I record "*Little House on the Prairie*" on DVR so that my kids and I can watch when we have time. For me it's a throw back to the '80s, watching TV after school with my mom and sisters. It was a tear-fest for us even as young girls. Now as I watch I see how manipulated the viewers' emotions are typically by the music and over-the-top sad stories (at Michael Landon's insistence the show did not stick to the books by Laura Ingalls Wilder and most story lines were made up, whatever made for good television, I suppose). Manipulated emotions aside I still enjoy watching with my kids and we have had some good discussions about morals, family values, etc.

Anyway, after watching several episodes I got to thinking: what was it like for the kid actors growing up on the show and where are they now? Luckily three of the main stars have autobiographies that I checked out. Laura, Mary & Nellie.

Laura Ingalls' Melissa Gilbert's memoir was fantastic. Right up my alley.

At first, my goal was to read as much about life on the set of *Little House* as possible. A few chapters into

Melissa's book and she had moved on to mostly her personal life. I guessed I would probably not finish the book because reading about her personal dramas weren't what I had in mind...BUT something happened. Her stories were actually super interesting and Melissa's writing was intriguing. She was candid, self-depreciating and seemed like the rest of us who are on a journey trying to figure out our lives. (She also knows a ton of celebrities and had some really honest and not so nice things to say about a few of them. That was just plain fun!)

Melissa happens to be a third generation entertainer, her parents and grandparents were legendary in old Hollywood and so she also had great stories about her grandfather and the Rat Pack, etc. Along with details from Melissa's personal journey (alcoholism, failed relationships - including one with Rob Lowe, - acting career), her stories about her extended family, and her stories about Hollywood I found this read to be quite enjoyable. In fact, I was so intrigued it only took me about a week to read!

I'll review Mary Ingalls' Melissa Sue Anderson's account of her Little House days next (what a snooze fest compared to Melissa's!) and then I'm off to read about Nellie's Allison Arngim.

Diane Sugars says

Well, I looked so forward to reading this book and it ended up dissapointing me so very much! Like so many other reviews of this book, I was dissapointed by the amount of profanity that was used in this book, and also very dissapointed in all of the sex and cheating that the author felt the need to tell us about. All of that totally ruined this book for me. By the second time she tells the readers about her and a certain man getting back together and all the references to sex and how much, etc, I was ready to put this book down and add it to my "Books I started but could not finish" list. But I did trudge through the book and finish it, and frankly, it did not get any better at all. I am a firm beleiver that you can tell just as good of a story without cussing and you can leave all the details about sex that was in this book out! I don't know if the author was going for the shock factor or what? I wanted more about her interaction with her Little House on the Prairie family, and there was hardly any! I know that Little House on the Prarie is not all that Melissa Gilberts life was, but, to her fans from Little House on the Prairie, that is what made her a star and that is what I looked for in this book. She referenced many many movies that she made in this book, and frankly, I had never heard of any of them, so I feel that she really missed telling a great story that would have been much more pleasant to read then having to read about hopping in and out of bed with whatever man she was starring with in all those movies that no one remembers.

Holly says

As a rabid Little House fan, I had to read this book. It was disappointing in the Little House remembrances, but that is to be expected since the woman did (and does) have a whole career after little house. However, the overall book is disappointing for me because though I love memoirs, I am not overly interested in celebrity gossip. Gilbert couldn't have dropped more names had she thrown a phone book down the stairs. (I must confess with being a bit intrigued about the drama with Rob Lowe, though!) I had to read a big chunk of it next to the computer so I could check who the people were on imdb.com. The books ending also falls a bit flat and felt like it didn't come to a satisfying conclusion. Perhaps that is the reason people shouldn't write memoirs in their forties.

The most amusing part of the book is actually in the acknowledgments, where she includes 2 pages of

alternate titles for the book suggested by friends and celebrities. My 2 favorites were, "Does this Gingham Dress Make my Butt Look Fat?" and "Don't F*** with America's Sweetheart." That's a book I wouldn't mind reading. ;)

Camelama says

Having just read "Confessions of a Prairie Bitch" by Nellie Oleson (ha - that is, by Alison who playd nellie!), I thought this book would be a great follow-up read. I was disappointed. Alison's book had a lot of detail about Little House, and I had hoped for the same from "Laura"'s point of view. It seems to have been rather glossed over, though she did talk about her relationship with Michael Landon. I just expected to hear more about such an incredibly significant part of her life, and that which truly brought her to our attention.

While interesting to read, the book did start to feel like name-dropping. But I guess if you grow up in Hollywood, you can't help but pepper your conversation with names!

It was interesting, but it didn't grab me like Alison's book did.

And holy cow - was there a bad made-for-tv-movie that Melissa Gilbert **didn't** act in, during the 90s and 00s?!?!

Laura says

I was inspired to read this after reading Rob Lowe's autobiography - this book isn't nearly as much fun. Melissa is very serious; she luckily was one of the few child stars that was somewhat sheltered and therefore didn't really grow up too fast. However, she doesn't really probe how or why that happened. . she just accepts it. The relationship with Lowe is really interesting between the two books - she dedicates almost entire chapters to it, where her name appears in a few paragraphs in his book. While I don't doubt that they're both accurate, their impressions are very different. The 2nd half of the book (her marriages, trips to rehab) seem a little rushed, and if she's disappointed in her later career, she doesn't seem it. I did want a little more information on the cast dynamic of 'Little House' - she drops names and tells about on-set pranks, but you don't get much of a sense of comradery between the actors, which seems strange for people who worked together for almost 10 years. Also, I just heard that her and Bruce Boxleitner are getting divorced. . . so I wonder how that's effecting things?

Anyway, if you're a fan of 'Little House', this is worth picking up - I loved the show and read all the books, so it was good to learn more about its star. Alison Antrim (Nellie) also wrote a book that's supposed to be much funnier; I'm going to check that one out too. And while she's kind of a sympathetic (if boring) character, it's really tough to picture her and Lowe together.

J.H. Moncrieff says

3.5 stars

It's really hard to review a memoir, or at least I find it that way. Melissa Gilbert was surprisingly honest and

open about the men she slept with, various celebrity encounters, how she got along with other actors and people in the industry, her struggles with addiction, and her plastic surgeries.

Which makes for an at-times riveting memoir (the parts about her SAG board meetings and running for SAG president and lobbying for hospice rights for children are decidedly less so). Unfortunately, her openness and honesty often makes her seem less likeable and vain. Hearing about how terrible Rob Lowe was to her (over and over again, apparently) and how nasty the girl who played Mary on Little House was, one can't help but wonder about THEIR side of the story.

I've seen other celebrity memoirs criticized because they didn't give up the goods, so I can understand why she told us about Michael Landon drinking on the set of Little House, his infidelity, or that he'd coloured his hair since Bonanza, and about every one of her paramours' failings, but it still struck me as cruel and unnecessary a lot of the time, especially for those who weren't here to defend themselves or give permission. I hope Gilbert spoke to their families first.

While I understand the impulse to write a tell-all as one's career wanes and opportunities grow fewer and farther between, it would be kinder and more respectful to hold at least some of these details back.
