



J A Y M c I N E R N E Y

Story of My Life

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In his breathlessly paced new novel Jay McInerney revisits the nocturnal New York of Bright Lights, Big City. Alison Poole, twenty going on 40,000, is a budding actress already fatally well versed in hopping the clubs, shopping Chanel falling in and out of lust, and abusing other people's credit cards. As Alison races toward emotional breakdown, McInerney gives us a hilarious yet oddly touching portrait of a postmodern Holly Golightly coming to terms with a world in which everything is permitted and nothing really matters.

Story of My Life Details

Date :

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Author : Jay McInerney

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From Reader Review Story of My Life for online ebook

L. says

?yj? po to, ?eby odkrywa? i czyta? takich pisarzy jak jay mcinerney.

Nikki says

The story's about this tough New York City party girl, and after the first few chapters, I go, Wow, this is surprisingly entertaining despite the fact that it's written without a single quotation mark, which usually drives me insane. No one talks. Every "goes." He goes, Hello. And then she goes, Hey. And then we go out to the club and snort lines the size of highway lane dividers and play really vicious games of Truth or Dare before sleeping with whoever happens to be sitting to our left. The main character is droll and likable, one of those slutty girls who's like the least slutty of all her slutty friends and definitely the smartest (except when she's totally the dumbest). Three-quarters of the way through the whole story kind of turns to mush in your mouth, but before that it reads like a *Sex and the City* prequel. Hard to believe it was written by a man because the female voice was pretty authentic but also ripe for parody, if you know what I mean.

Bluetiful Hadeel says

I think that I read other books for McInerney but don't remember. Anyways, this book has it all and i totally recommend it. I have read it and reread it so many times. Need an outlet? read this book, you will enjoy every second of it and finish it in one sit. You will be feeling sad sometimes, but you will laugh your head off other times :D The book is very frank by the way which will hook you instantly. You will be loving Alison (main character) and will be wanting to drive down to NY! :D Happy reading!

...

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Update: 30th August 2018

I have reread so many books lately and it seems that my point of view has changed with age... hmm... I don't know why I gave some books 5 stars although they literally deserve 4, 3 or even 2.

Anyhow, it is really good to know thyself and understand the same surroundings but in a different mindset.

:)

Ryan says

This book is supposedly about Rielle Hunter (the current mistress of John Edwards), back when she was a party girl in 1980's New York, and her father murdered her prized racing horses for the insurance money, and she went by the name Lisa Dreck. Or something like that. The character's name is Allison Poole.

Supposedly McInerney dated her briefly and was so appalled/fascinated with her and her friends, that he wrote this book, and made her the narrator. It's pretty funny; an amusing few hours' read, but nothing revelatory.

Glenn Russell says

Published originally as part of the American Vintage Contemporaries series, Jay McInerney's high octane novel is written from the point of view of a young woman, specifically 21-year old Alison Poole, a rich gorgeous aspiring actress living the cocaine-fueled revved-up life in 1980s Manhattan, a gal who tells her friends how after meeting and spending a night in bed with Dean, her new boyfriend, she is totally in lust. Her friends demand details: length and width.

Every page offers penetrating insight into a sociology of identity: all the subtle tricks these rich, beautiful men and women employ to make certain everyone in their elite clique adheres to their embraced surface values. No depth of character or personality, thank you. At one point Alison tell us, "My parents have seven marriages between them and any time I've been with a guy for more than a few weeks I find myself looking out the window during sex." Life as a whirlwind of instant gratification, one hit of skin-tingling pleasure after the other. "Just give me direct contact and you can keep true love."

And we listen as Alison speaks her mind on the significance of family: "These old novels and plays that always start out with orphans, in the end they find their parents – I want to say, don't look for them, you're better off without. Believe me. Get a dog instead. That's one of my big ambitions in life – to be an orphan. With a trust fund, of course"

She also shares her reflections on men: "Sometimes I think there must be some kind of secret ritual like circumcision where all boys have three-quarters of their brain removed at adolescence, or sense they just have to promise that they'll act and talk like they've been lobotomized, grunt in monosyllables like cavemen, and limit their emotions to the range between A and B. Still, they're the only other sex we've got. And they can make you feel so good sometimes you want to scream." Alison, you are such a sweetie – too bad our needy human nature requires us to seek fulfillment through others. What a bummer.

One of my favorite scenes: when a group of schoolchildren have the temerity to block Alison's path "Coming out of the store I got caught in this horrible preteen pedestrian traffic jam from the school down the street. Gremlins. I practically get run over by this tiny kid with a T-shirt that says REALITY IS AN ILLUSION PRODUCED BY ALCOHOL DEFICIENCY. Where was Planned Parenthood when we really needed them?"

A point of heightened drama occurs when a former drug dealer by the name of Mannie, knife in hand, crashes one of their parties to proclaim his love to Alison's sister Rebecca, who at the moment is leaning over a mirror and snorting a line of cocaine. Mannie screams that he will hurt himself if Rebecca doesn't come with him. Rebecca simply replies, "Be my guest." Following a violent exchange between Mannie and the other guys at the party, Mannie flings himself out the 6th floor window. Rebecca and all the others get really pissed off since they have to stop taking drugs and clean up in preparation for the police knocking at their door.

What I find so fascinating about this novel is not only Alison's numerous one-liners - "It's like nothing can touch us as long as we stay high" - but how life dedicated to pleasure-seeking plays itself out among the super-wealthy, uninhibited sexually-obsessed. Such a philosophy of bold sensual hedonism hearkens back to a school of ancient Greek philosophy - the Cyrenaics, who valued a person's own physical and bodily pleasure as the highest good.

Returning to our first-person narrator Alison, are we being completely fair if we hurl harsh judgements her way? Toward the end of the novel, she reports how her father's key business associate attempted to rape her as a young girl and how when she reported this incident to her father, he told her to simply forget it. Sadly, Alison also recollects how her father would walk into her bedroom and join her in bed. It is only one short line in the novel (perhaps a revealing narrative slip?) but it speaks volumes to the probability of sexual abuse and its devastating psychological consequences.

Tony says

McInerney, Jay. *STORY OF MY LIFE*. (1988). ***. After the success of his earlier novel, "Bright Lights, Big City," it was likely that his publishers would publish anything. This novel falls under the classification of "anything." It is the story of Alison Poole, a twenty-year old woman who lives in New York and who spends her life hopping from party to party and shopping at Chanel. She also spends a lot of time falling in and out of lust and abusing her friends' credit cards. She has never held a job in her life, unless you count the three seconds she was a waitress. She wants to be an actress, and manages to get to acting school on the rare occasion when she isn't strung out or hung over or locked in bed with her new toy. It's lucky for her that Daddy is a wealthy bond dealer, although he is sometimes late with her monthly allowance check that covers her rent, school tuition and living expenses – unless, of course, she sees a dress that she can't live without. She has a coterie of girlfriends that are just like her, and they all hang out together. Of course they compare notes on their various sex lives and borrow money from each other. As you would expect, Alison comes from a broken home. Her mom and dad got divorced when she was small, and now they have about seven marriages between them. That makes her an unbeliever in the institution of marriage and of having children. She talks like a valley girl and thinks like one, too. Whenever a serious thought starts to bubble up in her mind, she takes enough drugs to overcome it. This is not a woman you'd want to know; nor would you want to know her friends. This is not really a novel, since there is no plot. It is more a quick portrait of a woman doomed to float at the bottom of society and probably never rise to the surface.

TK421 says

For some unknown reason--actually the reason is known: I once read an article in a magazine where McInerney blasted a book/writer that I adored--a festering hate for Jay McInerney has been boiling up inside of me. Time to pop this wound and let the puss ooze.

Okay. I can check McInerney off my bucket-list of authors to read.

About three-fourths of the way through this novel, Allison Poole, the main character and narrator, has a conversation with her acting coach, Rob.

Every natural emotion has a beginning and an end, Rob says. If we surrender to a predominant emotion in class it will run its course in a healthy way. Of course, if you're deeply troubled then you may not be able to stop and that is a problem.

Maybe it's my imagination, maybe I'm paranoid, but it seems like he looks at me when he says this, I guess he's thinking about my little freak-out a few weeks ago, when I made like a spastic and had to go see the nurse. So okay, I never said I was normal.

Let me give you an example, Rob says, sitting up on his desk and folding his legs underneath each other--he used to study yoga in India before he decided to be an actor. Example, he goes, I sometimes have a fantasy of mowing down people on the street with a machete. I do. That doesn't mean I'm going to act on it. But it's something I occasionally feel. Not that I'm ever going to do it. A healthy adult can tell the difference between fantasy and reality. As a normal human being you recognize that you don't need to act on every impulse you feel. But as an actor you tap into the fantasy and use it. Of course, you have to know the difference between fantasy and reality.

Sun says

Alison Poole is a party girl come wannabe actress in New York. She's a cynic who's in touch with her inner child. She's got crazy friends and a dysfunctional family. This is her story.

McInerney achieves a power and a true voice and sustains it. Cutting insights and a deliriously good read.

Glenn Sumi says

So, like, first off, a confession: I don't read a lot of stuff.

Like maybe magazines at the doctor's office or while working out on the elliptical, or Facebook and Twitter posts and of course Instagram (I love using their awesome filters!) and Snapchat. But books? Sigh. Life is too short, ya know? I want to LIVE life, not READ about it.

But somehow this book grabbed my attention. It's about Alison Poole, a 20-year-old woman living a fabulous existence in late 1980s Manhattan. This is long before *Sex And The City* and *Girls*. And it's also LONG BEFORE EVERYONE OWNED A SMART PHONE! I mean, seriously, this was practically like a time capsule. The number of times people had to leave messages on answering machines was hilarious! I kept thinking: JUST TEXT THEM!!!

Anyhow, Alison. She grew up in the South, has a rich, absent dad who's obsessed with dating women who are about her own age (creepy huh?) and now she parties a lot. She's also studying to be an actress – a serious theatre actress – when she's not too hungover to attend her classes.

The book begins when Alison realizes her dad is late with her tuition money so – bummer – she can't attend

school. The way she gets out of it – which I won’t spoil here – shows you how clever she can be. Clever but also, maybe, a teensy bit manipulative and, as my literature prof used to say, “morally questionable.”

Not much happens. Alison hangs out with her rich bitch friends who have a variety of issues: one has an eating disorder, another is engaged to a guy who might not BE THE ONE, another has a way serious drug habit. They have problems paying rent, even though they all like to shop and take limos.

Then Alison meets a guy, some bond trader who is slightly older and wants to be a writer and knows everything about Shakespeare. She likes him – she keeps telling us she’s “falling in lust with him,” which made me laugh. But there are complications. She runs into her asshat ex and lots of other guys who have either been in her pants or want to be. When she can’t get ahold of the bond guy she thinks he’s cheating on her. She has a moral code: just be honest. And she can’t, ya know, lurk on social media to see what he’s up to.

I immediately connected to Alison and quickly realized that even though she speaks in a certain way – sort of like me, actually – and although people make assumptions about her because of her looks (I think she’s about a 9 or a 10), she’s pretty damn intelligent.

She’s also very funny, a real BS detector, like that guy from that book... you know the one... the one we all had to read in high school about the guy who drops out of prep school and hates phony people? Yeah, that one.

And she reminds me a bit of that character that Audrey Hepburn played in that awesome movie called *Breakfast At Tiffany's*: jaded and gorgeous and world-weary, but also kinda vulnerable. (Someone told me that was also based on a book, but as I already told you, I don’t read much!)

When I went on Wikipedia, I found out Alison Poole (if I were in high school I’m sure we’d have to look for some symbolism about her name – ya know, hidden depths and stuff?) was based on a real person named Rielle Hunter, who had an affair with some guy running for president and had a baby by him. Cool, huh?

According to a friend who reads a lot of books and recommended this one to me, the author also wrote something called *Bright Lights, Big City*, which also dealt with sex and drugs and made him a star of the "Literary Brat Pack" group, whatever that is. And apparently Alison was such a memorable character that she shows up in a couple of books by Bret Easton Ellis, another of those "Brat Pack" authors.

My friend told me the author of *Story Of My Life* matured a lot and went on to write things like *The Good Life* and *Bright, Precious Days* and also some books about wine.

He says the author is “terribly underrated, and is one of the best stylists working today.”

I don’t know about that. And frankly, I think my friend is a bit of a snob. But I enjoyed this book. It showed me that things aren’t always as they appear on the surface. Even pretty, rich people have lots of problems.

Gee. Maybe I’ll even read another book soon. Miracles never cease, huh?

Karen says

I come to review this and of course Angelina is here first--how?! HOW?! Anyway, I reread this book

constantly and love it to wee pieces. 80's bad girl in the city...siiigggh.

Victoria says

Meh, a really juicy tale, but not my favorite work of literature.

I think it was good writing, not great, but just good. I know that I ventured in knowing exactly what it was and there were no surprises, it was exactly as expected. I felt cheap and hungover afterwards, blah.

Basically its a short glimpse into an exaggerated tale of my own early drunken 20's past of regrets (minus the coke details, never got into it)

There were no tricks or plot twists, this was a plainly written story about sexually charged shallow rich white drug addicted people. I am not sure I will read more from this author anytime soon. I am not really into overly sexual shallow rich white addicted people tales.

Janarchy says

Probably one of the least bullshitty books I've ever read. The main character is more Salinger than Salinger, both sincere and intensely jaded. This book is extremely re-readable.

thecrx says

I'd like to hand out a copy of this book to every hipster in Williamsburg, so they can understand that they weren't the first people in the universe to discover ugly clothing and cocaine.

Kecia says

This was a fun read when I did read it (long before I decided to go to graduate school and learned how to pay better attention to things like plot, pace, voice).

I actually went to a reading when this book first came out and when he signed my book I felt the need to correct him on the Life magazine photo that's mentioned in the book (she's face-up, not face-down; makes all the difference). I don't think I've ever done that to any other author since but I was a 23-year-old nerd and this was IMPORTANT to me. Story of my life. (There's no *the* in the title, Goodreads folks.)

Sharon says

The back cover compares Jay McInerney's Alison Poole to Truman Capote's Holly Golightly. I can see the similarities, but I think McInerney's novel is better because he was able to do with words what only Hollywood was able to do to Capote's work - make an unlikeable character likeable. At the end of 'Breakfast at Tiffany's' you want to kick Holly's butt (at least I did), but at the end of 'Story of My Life' you wish that there was a phone number you could call to ask if Alison is alright. Alison is funny, cool, smart and in a

twisted way, admirable. The ending wasn't what I wanted it to be, but this book is a keeper.

Haydon says

The characterisation in this novel is wonderful, and the stylistic choices are extremely well-suited to the story. It loses a star only because it lacks the startling originality of McInerney's previous novel, 'Bright Lights, Big City'.

Moira Russell says

Much better than any of his other work, but this got no attention! One of the few male writers of the eighties who successfully wrote from a woman's point of view. And yet this is hardly known.

ETA Well, rather than actually dreaming up a character, apparently McInerney just transcribed the thoughts and sayings of his girlfriend at the time (he appears to have been the novel's slumming Dean) who went on to become Jonathan Edwards' babymama. That's....just so very disappointing. (I can't stand his work other than this book, and now it feels weird to like this one.)

Cammie says

This is one of the funniest books I've ever read. It's packed with rapier-sharp wit and hilarious misadventures, all delivered at breakneck speed. It's also a story of unexpected depth, despite the ridiculously shallow cast of characters and their asinine preoccupations.

There's nothing particularly profound about the people and the 80s New York lifestyle it satirises, and it's not a book that screams Literary with a capital L. But make no mistake, it's very finely written and full of acute observations and three-dimensional characters.

The real triumph of this book is probably that McInerney writes so convincingly as Alison Poole. If he weren't a man and famous in his own right for a distinctly different personality, I'd accuse this novel of being a thinly-veiled autobiography. He nailed the voice that well.

I've come across some criticisms that this book lacks a 'plot', but when you're reading about characters and situations as hideous and amusing as the ones in this book, a plot almost seems beside the point. This is a character novel that succeeds both as entertainment and as a work of literature.

christa says

In August, it became national news that there was a Jay McInerney novel that I had somehow overlooked. I thought I had McInerney covered — I even read his *winefesto Hedonist in the Cellar* for the love of God — and here was a novel-novel, probably set in New York City in the '80s, probably filled with a cast of coke

fiend scenesters, and probably something I should have read years ago.

Story of my Life is written from the perspective of 20-year-old Alison Poole, a party girl and aspiring actress. She is a slightly nasally uptalker, who drops a lot of “like” and “rights?” and “and then he goes, so I go ...” into the running monologue that is this story.

Like the other women in her girl posse, Alison has grown accustomed to a certain father-financed lifestyle, but lately his check-writing trigger finger has slowed. She gets resourceful, in one scene pinching smarmy ex-fling Skip Pendleton for \$1,000 cash to abort a fictitious pregnancy, then using the money for tuition.

This is truly the See Dick Run novel of the McInerney collection: A 3-hour read with every word filtered through Alison’s voice: Cocaine, money grubbing, ass-grabbing, method acting and parties that end in naked “truth or dare” games where Alison has slept with most of the men in the circle and the truths result in hurt feelings. The story is simple and spans one naval-gazing month.

Alison is at that contradictory — yet not at all complex — stage: She understands it isn’t healthy to rely on her father for money, but blames him for raising her so that she expects this treatment. More than anything, she hates lies, but sometimes relies on omission. When she can’t reach her new boyfriend Dean on the phone, she correctly assumes the worst and sets out to one-up him. She loathes Skip Pendleton, but is drawn into his smug and evil vortex. When Alison comes home to find her sister and roommate all hopped up on whatever, she wonders if she sounds like such an idiot when she is messed up. Alison claims that she has slept with a lot of men, but she’s not exactly slutty. She passes off the phone number for an escort service as her own. Alison agrees to meet up with a man, and sends him to a dark tenement building that is at least a \$20 cab ride from his home — and, of course, does not show up.

While Alison is flawed and irresponsible, she is written in an endearing way. She used to ride horses! Her greatest love is acting! And she is funny:

“I don’t know, these downtown artsy coifs may get attention, but not necessarily the right kind. I don’t think most guys are too keen on running their fingers through a fashion statement.”

“So Chuck’s with some girl he must have met in Las Vegas, although she’s actually from Texas, even her lips look like they’ve got silicone implants. Her name’s Tina, but she tells me her friends call her Teeny, and she kind of looks at her chest when she says this and jiggles her tits and that pretty much tells you more than you’d ever want to know about her.”

This is not the great McInerney novel. But he really nails Alison Poole’s voice and the confusion and competitiveness of being a 20 year old who hangs out with other 20 year olds. Those pensive “Who Am I” moments that are interrupted by a craving for Mexican food.

Don says

If I come across another book reviewer who disses a work of literary fiction because they find the novel's characters unlikeable...

You know who I find unlikeable? YOU. Yes, you and your disdain for anything that can't be easily adapted into some Hallmark movie. That's who I find unlikeable.

As for this book's characters, yes, they're unlikeable, but goddammit that's why I like them so much!
