



Palo Alto: Stories

By James Franco

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Now a “provocative” and “impressive” (*Variety*) film from director Gia Coppola (Francis Ford Coppola’s granddaughter)—starring Emma Roberts, James Franco, Nat Wolff, and Val Kilmer—the fiction debut from James Franco that *Vogue* called “compelling and gutsy.”

James Franco’s story collection traces the lives of a group of teenagers as they experiment with vices of all kinds, struggle with their families and one another, and succumb to self-destructive, often heartless nihilism. In “Lockheed” a young woman’s summer—spent working a dull internship—is suddenly upended by a spectacular incident of violence at a house party. In “American History” a high school freshman attempts to impress a girl with a realistic portrayal of a slave owner during a classroom skit—only to have his feigned bigotry avenged. In “I Could Kill Someone,” a lonely teenager buys a gun with the aim of killing his high school tormentor, but begins to wonder about his bully’s own inner life.

These “spare and riveting” (*O, The Oprah Magazine*) stories are a compelling portrait of lives on the rough fringes of youth. *Palo Alto* is, “a collection of beautifully written stories” (*Kirkus Reviews*, starred review) that “capture with perfect pitch the impossible exhilaration, the inevitable downbeatness, and the pure confusion of being an adolescent” (*Elle*).

Features a bonus essay by James Franco on Gia Coppola's film adaptation.

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Palo Alto: Stories By James Franco Bibliography

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Given that Franco could have opted to coast by on movie star mystique, the decision to write about the suburb of his upbringing is intriguing. But the author fails to find anything remotely insightful to say in these 11 amazingly underwhelming stories. The privileged, borderline sociopathic eighth-grade consciousness into which stories like "Killing Animals" and "Tar Baby" consign us is saturated in first-wave Nintendo games and an egregiously gleeful dosage of homophobia and puerile race-baiting that is exhausting, even in a collection where the average story is 10 pages long. Still, tales like "Camp" and the above-average "American History" manage to successfully construe bad-kid amorality as authenticity, which is more than can be said of "I Could Kill Someone," one of several stories that reads like Patrick Bateman from *American Psycho* fell into a *Catcher in the Rye* remix, or the colossal misfire that constitutes "Emily," written from the point of view of a teenage girl who performs carnal acts on every page. The overall failure of this collection has nothing to do with its side project status and everything to do with its inability to grasp the same lesson lost on its gallery of high school reprobates: there is more to life than this.

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From [Booklist](#)

A certain amount of skepticism accompanies the reading of a movie star's short story collection. Are they worthy of publication? Would I read them if written by someone else? The stories in *Palo Alto* depict the confused experiences of teenagers in Palo Alto, California. The characters surprise with their maturity then devolve into moments of violent stupidity. Their beautiful lack of self-awareness drives the stories. In *Killing Animals*, Franco deftly addresses race as some wannabe delinquents find themselves in over their heads. Infatuations, drunkenness, and boredom find space throughout the collection. Each story's simplicity belies complexity of emotion and maturation. Franco conveys something we all know but enjoy hearing again: growing up is painful yet wonderful. The deceptive simplicity also masks the complexity of Franco's writing. His economic construction seems so simple throughout, but the stories end up approaching profundity. These stories were not published because James Franco is a movie star but because they are good. He makes the difficult appear simple, which only a talented writer can do. --Blair Parsons

Review

"The stories are raw and funny-sad, and they capture with perfect pitch the impossible exhilaration, the inevitable downbeat-ness, and the pure confusion of being an adolescent."—*Elle*

"Spare and riveting... Franco's ear for juvenile vernacular is like an Ouija board summoning the lost voices of Generation Z."—*O, the Oprah Magazine*

"Compelling and gutsy."—Meghan O'Grady, *Vogue*

"Startling and original."—*The Economist*

"[Franco] ends up perfectly mirroring the undulations of a teenage mind."—*The New York Times Book Review*

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Eric Ray:

The knowledge that you get from Palo Alto: Stories is the more deep you rooting the information that hide inside the words the more you get enthusiastic about reading it. It does not mean that this book is hard to be aware of but Palo Alto: Stories giving you joy feeling of reading. The author conveys their point in a number of way that can be understood by simply anyone who read it because the author of this publication is well-known enough. This particular book also makes your own personal vocabulary increase well. So it is easy to understand then can go with you, both in printed or e-book style are available. We highly recommend you for having this kind of Palo Alto: Stories instantly.

Jerry Goble:

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