



# Hungry for Happiness

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## **Hungry for Happiness** James Villas

In his engaging, powerful, and laugh-out-loud funny second novel, the award-winning author of "Dancing in the Lowcountry" serves up a story of friendship, dreams, and determination featuring a sassy Southern heroine as real as she is unforgettable.

## **Hungry for Happiness Details**

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# From Reader Review Hungry for Happiness for online ebook

## Delores says

I was in the mood for a light read and this book filled the bill. While it wasn't fabulous, it wasn't terrible either. The story is about Loretta, who was overweight most of her life until she had her stomach "banded." After losing a significant amount of weight, she still struggles with the acceptance of her new body, questions whether or not she is now "thin enough," and has many battles with controlling herself so she does not gain her weight back. Loretta is also an incredible cook, a talent she learned from her mother with whom she has a dysfunctional relationship. Mainly, Loretta is looking for happiness and fulfillment in her life. What I did enjoy about the book was the ending because it didn't have a fairytale ending. While Loretta did not find everything she was looking for it did seem she had reached a place of acceptance; knowing where she had come from and the direction she wanted her life to go in. An added plus to the book was the recipes provided at the end. The chocolate enchiladas sound especially yummy.

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## Rachel says

Hungry for Happiness is the story of Loretta Crawford, a 36-year old woman who's husband leaves her for another, thinner woman. Loretta decided to change her life and starts by having lap band surgery. Before her surgery she weighed 280 pounds (and was only 5'4"). Even though Loretta is losing weight, she still loves to cook and word gets around that she's one of the best cooks around. Soon she has her own catering business. Also, as she loses more and more weight, she catches the eye of more and more men.

I noticed some reviewers didn't like Loretta's Texas dialect and thought it was over the top. I'm not Texan so I can't say for sure if it was accurate but even if it was over the top I thought it was charming and funny.

I think the overall message of this book was that there are no simple solutions to life's problems. Loretta thinks that weight loss surgery and losing weight will automatically make her happy but she doesn't realize that she has underlying issues that caused her to gain the weight in the first place. However, I don't feel like Loretta ever really understood that and I would have expected her to eventually have some sort of revelation. This book started out with a bang and ended with kind of a whimper.

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## Michelle Rabinowitz says

As a southern woman, I literally hate the main character's language. No woman I know talks like she does. Also, all of the characters have names from a century ago and this book seems to be set in the early 2000s. There were 2 things that were interesting/honest: the fact that a once fat girl gone thin is still unhappy, and obsessed, with her looks... and her detail in cooking. For these reasons, I gave it 2 Stars.

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## MissSusie says

I just don't think I enjoyed this book at all. Loretta was a miserable woman and the way she talked about

overweight people was dreadful, I could understand if it was about herself like an inner dialogue we all have that but the way she spoke about her mother, her sister and her friends got to be too much. It's one thing to worry about their health but to call them fat tubs or lard or fatties was just over the top. Also I really doubt everyone is called bub, southern people calling you hun yes but I guess everything in this book was just over the top.

The description of this book is deceiving especially saying this is moving, witty and uplifting there is nothing uplifting in this book and it says it will resonate with woman of any size well it resonated with me and NOT in a good way.

I was also a bit offended by the discussion questions in the back of the book, the first one talks about Loretta's social status and does she try to elevate it, well yes she does that's all through the book but the way these questions are worded is offensive. I am not from Texas or from the south but I think Texan woman would be very offended by this book or at least should be.

Maybe if this book was written by a woman who has been through weight loss and stomach banding it may have been uplifting but it was written by a man who definitely doesn't like women with a little meat on their bones.

2 Stars

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### **Jeanie says**

I've read a lot of the other reviews about this book and, on principle, I actually agree with a lot of the comments (language, use of GD in every few sentences, criticism of obese women, etc) but overall I think I just didn't take the book as seriously or personally as most reviewers seemed to. I just read it, enjoyed the parts I enjoyed and let the parts that were distasteful to me not stick in my brain. The parts I enjoyed being her journey into the catering business, the descriptions of her menus or recipes she was cooking and the fact that an obese woman found the wherewithal to decide that she wanted to get healthier and did so with no support from family. At the end, I just hoped for Loretta to find: Jesus (and stop taking His name in vain), happiness and peace within herself, a man who would appreciate her most for the person she was inside rather than outside and grand success in her catering business. I read his book *Dancing in the Low Country* and, honestly, don't remember any details at all, but that I liked it.

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### **Fran Calloway says**

All the characters in this book are a total mess and the main character, Loretta, appears the worst of all. Loretta has plenty of addictions other than food. And her language is filled with profanity, "GD" being her favorite and literally on every page. This storyline had the potential for being so much more, but I did enjoy the recipes incorporated with her catering business.

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## **Mickey says**

This wasn't bad but it could have been better. The heroine is a deep-fried Southern former fat girl and the story picks up after she's had lap-band surgery. She suffers through some strange, bizarre, and sad relationship issues, has countless arguments with her overweight family members who think she's 'putting on airs' now that she's lost weight, yet succeeds with carrying on her life despite all of the obstacles thrown in her path. My biggest gripes are the highly exaggerated Southern accent the author manages to write with, and the fact that he makes Loretta seem like a victim despite her successes.

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## **Denise says**

Two stars is correct - it was ok. The story was unspectacular and not what I was hoping for. For lack of a better phrase, the story was shallow. The narrator was shallow. The writing style was annoying almost to the point of distraction, and made it more difficult to like any of the characters. I've been to Texas. I have friends from Texas. They don't go around using "sugar" and "hon" every other word. I understand wanting to convey a time and place, but it's just insulting to me that the author doesn't believe I can adequately imagine a Texas accent. It was ok, and I read it all the way through, but I certainly don't recommend it.

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## **Susan says**

Having finally received the book yesterday, after winning the drawing in November, I started reading it last night.

Meh. I've gotten about halfway through, and I've come to the decision that it's hard for men to write women characters. The premise is interesting: A woman's life changes a lot after having gastric bypass surgery and losing over 100 lbs. However, Loretta is very naive, doesn't see what's happening right under her nose, and she tries too hard to get her overweight relatives to change their lives, too. The idea that some people are content with their state, whether overweight or not, never occurs to her. She's happier thin, therefore everyone else will be happier thin, too.

The recipes in the back of the book look good. I want to try the one for lemon drop cookies.

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## **Chelle says**

I am not going to read this book. The reason is on the first page, where, after ranting about "fat, disgusting fat--pure and simple", he lets us know that the character is 5'4" and 280 pounds.

I'm tired of men randomly deciding what too fat is for women. I'm 5'4" but under 280, and I can guarantee that we all carry it differently, and not only do we not all look disgusting, but THAT'S A SHITTY WAY TO JUDGE PEOPLE. He probably wouldn't find me disgustingly fat on sight, and he obviously cares more about a number that SOUNDS "disgustingly fat" than looks fat. I doubt he'd do well guessing weights at a fair, but I can totally see him being a man who trash talks women over a size 2 on the street.

Despite this, I did randomly browse through the rest of the book, in case it was redeemable.

It wasn't. It was offensive. It was the most anti-woman book with a female main character I've ever almost-

read.

I'm not even going to put it in the neighborhood free library. I'm not selling it to the Half Price Book store. I may set it on fire

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### **Rachel Ekberg says**

I had to force myself to finish this book. No one talks like that, no one dresses like that, and the main characters are absolutely loathsome. The entire premise, plot, and description of the South are all extremely unrealistic, patronizing, demeaning toward women, and poorly researched.

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### **Terri Watts says**

This book was awful! Typically I only give books 1 star if I disliked it so much I couldn't finish it, which has only happened once and that was in Elementary school. However, I made an exception with this book. This is also the first book I've really taken the time to put a review down for.

I called most of the plot "twists" and was repulsed by the manner of language in this book. Who calls their best friend fatso and repulsive and everything else this writer says Let does? Also, no 280 is not skinny and yes is probably fat however, grotesquely obese to the point they need help up is not realistic, for a person who is 5'4" unless they have absolutely no muscle mass. The way this author writes makes it seem like anyone with any extra body fat is gross and repulsive. Which a healthy body fat range is 20-25% for women and a little lower for men. Throughout reading this book I repeatedly thought that whomever wrote the book was a narcissistic shallow douchebag pretty much from chapter 1 on. I completely get why women are constantly questioning their appearance and body image and it's because of writings such as this and the image that today's society places on looks. I absolutely would never suggest anyone read this book. A complete waste of time and piece of garbage.

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### **Rachael says**

I hated it. First of all, it's incredibly insulting to anyone that has even a few extra pounds. And if a man is attracted to a heavier woman is a "pervert" and "needs serious help"? The main character is negative, hateful, and allows herself to be used and abused in an attempt to make her friends see how great she is. And, as a born and raised Texan, all I can say about the dialogue and description of these people and places is just NO. Has the writer ever been to Texas? If so I'd like to know where he went that this is the impression that he got. It's insulting to me as Texan and a woman who has struggled with her weight. I don't have a single positive thing to say about the book. I would have given it less than one star if it was possible.

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### **bookczuk says**

I was interested to read this book for several reason. I like books that purport to be "southern" and this one's blurb talked about southern cooking. I love to cook, and often like the books that tell stories involving food, and cooking (which I almost typed as "fooking", but that's something entirely different.) James Villas is a

renowned food writer and cook book author, so at least that aspect of the book promised to be hopeful. I like stories about people who transform themselves, not necessarily physically, but emotionally and mentally, and this book hinted at that. So, when I was sent the book via the wonderful LibraryThing Early Reviewers from Kensington Publishing, I was pleased.

I think I expected something simpler than Villas actually served up. This is the story of Loretta Crawford, and her life after her gastric banding. When the book starts, Loretta's 280 lbs, surgery, recovery, and marriage are already at least 130 pounds in the past. She is determined to lose more weight, reshape her life and find elusive love and happiness. Loretta's misadventures with various men who come into her life, with her somewhat hapless family, her friends and even her seemingly masochistic wish to become a caterer are what fill the pages of the book. (There are recipes at the back.)

While there are some fine moments in the book, I was put off by a few things. First of all, I kept wondering what Loretta's reasons were for the surgery. Not that I question having it, but her motivation wasn't clear: Humiliation because her man left her? Disgust at her size and inabilities to do simple activities? To improve her health? To start a new life? To attract another man? I just wasn't sure. While I think that those who choose to have any type of gastric surgery, be it a gastropasty or a banding etc, have tremendous courage, I would hope that motivation might be more than getting a date or sex partner. But I suppose whatever motivates is a good thing. For someone who was once so large, Loretta seemed really hypercritical of other large people. But I guess that's pretty common among converts to anything. Your way is best, and those who don't see so are somewhat benighted. Loretta's love life also was a little quirky. (At one point, I got confused -- the author uses the euphemism of "lighting his firecracker" for hanky panky, and Loretta calls a woman a fireplug -- I had to re-read the sentence to make sure the woman wasn't a transsexual.)

But perhaps the biggest thing that bothered me was the use of Texan as Southern. Maybe I'm more of a Steel Magnolias kind of person when it comes to Southern and Southern cooking, but Texas, though southern, is a whole different kettle of grits than the deep south. Kind of like milk chocolate and dark chocolate are both the same thing, but are really quite different.

All in all, I'm glad I read the book. Loretta's a good cook, for sure, and I think basically a good person. Given all the family secrets and stories that emerge and the back history, it's easy to see why the book is titled *Hungry for Happiness*. I came away feeling that Loretta was a survivor and would find just the right recipe to make her life complete.

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## Monica says

This book is so terribly insulting and demeaning to women, I can't even read past the first chapter. Who the hell does this guy think he is?

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