



A Selfie as Big as the Ritz

Lara Williams

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Pushcart Prize-nominated Lara Williams' debut is a candid, wry, and deeply moving road map to contemporary adulthood.

She finds herself single, twenty-nine, partially-employed, and about a half a stone overweight. Roller dexter of eligible friends rattling thin. Thirties breathing down her neck like an inappropriate uncle. She jogs. Looks good in turquoise. Finds herself punctuating gas "better out than in!" patting her stomach like a department store Santa. This is who I am, she thinks.

The women in Lara Williams' debut story collection, *A Selfie as Big as the Ritz*, navigate the tumultuous interval between early twenties and middle age. In the title story, a relationship implodes against the romantic backdrop of Paris. In "One of Those Life Things," a young woman struggles to say the right thing at her best friend's abortion. In "Penguins," a girlfriend tries to accept her boyfriend's bizarre sexual fantasy. In "Treats," a single woman comes to terms with her loneliness. As Williams' characters attempt to lean in, fall in love, hold together a family, fend off loneliness, and build a meaningful life, we see them alternating between expectation and resignation, giddiness and melancholy, the rollercoaster we all find ourselves on.

A Selfie as Big as the Ritz Details

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Author : Lara Williams

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From Reader Review A Selfie as Big as the Ritz for online ebook

Cherise Wolas says

This is an atmospheric and short collection of 21 stories revolving around love found and lost or discarded, relationships that peter out, the struggles and setbacks of those who are mostly in their 20s and 30s, and so very unclear about what they might want for themselves. They seem clear about themselves though, we are very much in their minds, learning the thoughts of these characters floating through their lives, barely attached to the ground. The writing is spare, and there are many wonderful turns of phrase. Under 200 pages, it took me a long time to read these stories, because I wanted to keep each separate so they didn't run together in my mind, but also because the melancholic angst had to be doled out in small parcels.

Alan says

Excellent, sharp stories of (mostly) single women in or out of relationships (including details of some bizarre sexual preferences of boyfriends), as student, worker, ex. Involving, funny, I did knock off a star due to overuse of the second person. I don't know, it does work well sometimes (e.g. One of my favourite novels is in s.p., despite the 'My': 'The Sound of My Voice' by Ron Butlin), but it seems presumptuous somehow, 'you look for an apartment' - no I don't.

Estelle Laure says

Normally when I read short stories, I read one or two at a time. This acted like a really compelling novel. I could not put it down. I laughed, cried, and sighed. I had many moments of wonder about the mastery on a sentence level AND an emotional catharsis. Definitely, definitely five stars.

Book Pairings (Laci Long) says

This is a great collection of stories about women who were not following the roadmap to the “perfect life” for one reason or another. In each story you get a glimpse of the character’s life. I thought that they were all well developed stories (which I think is hard to do in a short story). I loved that the women were portrayed as not having their lives together because that feels authentic to where most 20-something women are in their lives. Life never goes according to plan and I felt that this collection did a good job of highlighting that without it becoming depressing.

Overall, I thought this was a great collection and gave it 3 out of 5 stars. I do wish there was more time spent on a few stories, but overall as a collection I thought it was well written and thoughtful. This is definitely worth a read if you are feeling a bit lost yourself or just enjoy flawed characters.

Arthur Graham says

This wound up being much better than I thought it would be going in. Sort of like an Alice Munro-lite for the Millennial set. 3.5 stars, coming from a reader who is probably not part of the intended audience.

I won this book as part of a Goodreads giveaway.

Stacey says

I won a copy of this book from @booksugar (via IG) and Flatiron Books. Though I really like short stories, I haven't read any collections in a long time. I was happy to dive into this one - I found the writing really accessible and really well written.

Jenn says

I won a copy of this book.

What can I say, I love these stories! They're glimpses into the lives of people, well-written, and they each create a beautiful picture of that person's reality. Asking you, the reader, to allow Williams to take over your brain for a moment so she can show you something.

Janelle • She Reads with Cats says

A SELFIE AS BIG AS THE RITZ by Lara Williams - Thank you so much to Flatiron Books for providing my free copy – all opinions are my own.

I read this short story collection in one sitting – it's a tiny book that has a big impact. I enjoyed it much more than I thought I would. I'd say the target audience is twenty-something women, but that didn't bother me. I really loved five stories in particular, One of Those Life's Things, Dates, This Small Written Thing, It Begins, and Treats. These short stories are very well-written and each story gives you a small view into each person's life. I loved that the women portrayed in this collection did not have their life "perfectly together" and are still trying to figure out their own way. I think we can all relate to that at one time or another.

I also have to add that the book, dust jacket, pages.... ALL. OF. IT. is just GORGEOUS!

Bridgett Brown says

I won this in a Goodreads Giveaway.

This is a small book. It's only 145 pages but also it's a tiny book, like half the size of a normal book. In the title story, a relationship implodes in Paris. In "One of Those Life Things," a young woman struggles to say the right thing at her best friend's abortion. In "Penguins," a girlfriend tries to accept her boyfriend's bizarre sexual fantasy. In "Treats," a single woman comes to terms with her loneliness.

I really enjoyed the small stories in this book.

MaryBeth's Bookshelf says

A Self as Big as the Ritz is a collection of short stories all about love, loss, and relationships. I enjoyed reading the different perspectives and it made me think about how you truly do not know what goes on between two people behind closed doors.

The writing was perfect, detailed, and honest.

AJ says

Quick Take:

This was a great short story collection showcasing several relatable women at different points in their lives.

We got to see small snippets of their days that somehow managed to convey everything we needed to know about their hopes and disappointments. Most could be described as 'lost,' although I hate that term. There is so much pressure to have everything figured out at 22, right out of college. If you don't start then, you'll never be able to catch up. The women Williams introduces us to did not get started then, or they did but then hit a bump somewhere along the perfect life road. This short story collection made me feel better about not having my life 'together' (who gets to define what together even means?) as I enter my late twenties. I just wish we had more time with each story rather than just the short snippets. Definitely worth a read if you are also entering your late twenties or just feel a bit lost or not completely 'together.'

Olivia "Don't Blame Me I Voted for Hillary" says

Superb collection of short stories about women from their early 20s through middle age in relationships. The stories were wonderful.

Claire (bookcoffeeandrepeat) says

Short stories about love and adulthood.

Not bad! But it's pretty bleak at times.

Julie Ehlers says

Many of us have taken a selfie at one time or another, especially if we're on social media and/or have a smartphone that makes it simple, and it doesn't say anything about our character one way or the other. However, fairly or not, the term "selfie" has connotations of extreme self-absorption: people who ignore their surroundings in favor of staring at their phones, who constantly overshare on Instagram and Facebook, and, of course, who document their every look or mood with a new photo of themselves. Given this, is it a good idea to include the word "selfie" in a book title? I'm sure the publisher thought *A Selfie as Big as the Ritz* (also the name of one of the stories in this collection) sounded very up-to-the-minute and zeitgeisty, and perhaps assumed the reader would take it ironically. Still, it seems like a pretty big risk to take for an author's first book, a needless obstacle the book must surmount to prove its worth.

So does *A Selfie as Big as the Ritz* surmount the obstacle of its own title? Nope!

This collection contains 21 stories, many of them only 3-4 pages long, and all of them show a bewildering allegiance to the most unoriginal of clichés. It's as if this author hasn't really absorbed any of the thoughts and feelings she's had about the real events of her life, but she's paid avid attention to all the media stereotypes of sitcoms and women's magazines, and she believes in those with all of her heart. If you're in your 30s, you must be heading towards oldmaidsville. If you're getting a cat, you're a crazy cat lady. If you're a single mother, you must always feel like a lesser being for not being married. No one here subverts these expectations or even questions them. As a reading experience, it's not just unsatisfying, it's downright depressing.

Equally depressing is how *weary* all of these characters are, and how dull. Most of them seem to be in their mid-twenties, so I couldn't for the life of me figure out why they were all so weary about everything, as if each of them had already seen enough hardships for ten people—when, based on these stories, most of them had actually seen very few hardships thus far in their brief lives. No one has any interests or passions; the people in couples tend to lie on the couch wordlessly watching TV in sweats, and the single people go out and do things solely because they need to distract themselves from the fact that they're single. I guess the weariness and depression and boredom are the point, but there's more to life than this. Out of 21 stories, couldn't maybe 5 of them have been about something else? This collection would have benefited from the contrast.

Then there's the matter of the writing: It's the same all the way through. I don't know how old Lara Williams is, but I assume she's on the young side, and really, someone needs to let these young, internet-based writers know that different styles and tones can be used for different effects. It doesn't all have to be in *the same voice, all the time, for all 21 stories*. You can change it up a little! No, seriously, change it up a little. Change it up. At least a little. Please.

I will admit that there were two or three lines in here that made an impression on me. Offhand I can't think of what they are, but I'm sure there were, so I'll give this two stars instead of one. Should you read it? No, not right now. In 30 or 40 years everyone who remembers life before the internet will be dead, or near death. By then, stuff like this will probably seem like the height of genius. I would suggest waiting and reading it then. Visit my grave and tell me what you thought of it!

I won this book in a Goodreads giveaway.

thehalcyondaysofsummer says

Opening line: ‘And so it begins.’
