



The Heart is Deceitful Above All Things

By J. T. Leroy

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The extraordinary stories that brought the author a cult following at the age of sixteen.

These are the stories of a young boy on the run, away from his past, hellbent towards an unknown future. Connected, they form a sometimes harrowing, sometimes bleakly funny, and often tender portrait of a complicated life. Like a modern-day Voltaire, LeRoy bounces his characters from adventure to adventure, each of them unyielding in the belief that the best of all possible worlds lies just around the next corner. Fresh, raw, and absolutely unforgettable, *The Heart is Deceitful Above All Things* has further established the acclaimed author of *Sarah* as one of the most compelling voices in contemporary fiction.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

LeRoy rose to considerable notoriety as the teenaged author of last year's *Sarah*, a novel about a gender-confused kid whose mother is a truckers' prostitute. In his latest work, a rawly written, riveting series of 10 interlocked stories that read fluidly as a novel, LeRoy returns to the themes of guilt and sin in the first-person voice of a boy so viciously abused by his caretakers that he is left with barely a sense of his own identity. Jeremiah is a child nobody wants, and he passes swiftly from foster parents to his angry and vindictive teenaged mother, Sarah, to his fanatically Evangelical grandparents. Sarah, herself badly wounded by her punishing, Bible-obsessed parents, gave birth to the boy when she was only 14; she returns at 18 to claim him. "Nobody takes what's mine," spouts the foul-mouthed, pill-popping, paranoid young woman. It's soon clear that Sarah cares nothing for her son, who becomes an unwelcome tagalong on her transient cross-country misadventures in hooking louche sugar daddies, stripping, turning tricks for truckers and cooking up explosive "crystal" in one boyfriend's cellar. The boy, who begins to crave Sarah's punishment as a way of keeping his life in balance, is frequently whipped for bed-wetting and is raped by her unsavory boyfriends; his denial of his sexuality becomes a pathetic attempt to identify with his tormentor. LeRoy depicts his ill-begotten characters as tenderly as Jean Genet, and delineates their acts of sadism and self-mutilation as unsparingly as A.M. Homes. Yet the stories resist spiraling into mere sensationalism. While Sarah becomes almost cartoonish in her savagery, the characters of the trucker child prostitute Milkshake and the lumbering biker Buddy are poignantly understated. Jeremiah, conflicted, emotionally bled but never self-pitying or defeated, elicits a gratifying sympathy. LeRoy's work is a startling achievement in his accelerating mastery of the literary form. (June)

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From Library Journal

The stories collected in this volume by cult writer LeRoy, whose debut novel *Sarah* was published to critical acclaim, constitute a picaresque memoir set mainly in the urban underbelly of San Francisco. The author's challenge here is to extract something fresh from a terrain so familiar that it is a well-established microgenre, yet it's difficult to assess how well LeRoy succeeds, since one's judgment is inevitably skewed by the presentation of these stories as autobiographical. On the other hand, given how well LeRoy fulfills the ground rules of his narrative, its documentary value might be beside the point. This is the kind of work that gets described as "raw" and "honest," and while it certainly occupies a niche in the literary market, it's hard to imagine that this particular example is essential in any but the most comprehensive collections. Philip Santo, Metropolitan Museum of Art Lib., New York

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From [Booklist](#)

It's rare for a book written by a teenager to be published for an adult audience, but the 10 stories collected here showcase an author who, despite his age (he wrote some of the stories at 16), has a genuinely authoritative voice. Nowhere is this more evident than in the title story, which portrays the sexual abuse of a child by his mother's former lover in horrifying, clinical detail. Although LeRoy's youth is occasionally apparent both in his choice of big themes and in the lack of complexity with which he treats them, the raw power of his prose overcomes these intimations of immaturity. His refusal to sentimentalize the abuse and criminality that his characters suffer and inflict illuminates a disturbing world about which LeRoy clearly knows too much. What's truly remarkable about these stories is the way they reflect one teenager's frightening vision of the human heart as being both fundamentally deceitful and awash in depraved indifference toward the emotional well-being of children. *John Green*

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Michelle Curry:

This *The Heart is Deceitful Above All Things* are reliable for you who want to become a successful person, why. The main reason of this *The Heart is Deceitful Above All Things* can be one of several great books you must have will be giving you more than just simple examining food but feed a person with information that possibly will shock your before knowledge. This book is definitely handy, you can bring it just about everywhere and whenever your conditions at e-book and printed ones. Beside that this *The Heart is Deceitful Above All Things* giving you an enormous of experience for instance rich vocabulary, giving you test of critical thinking that could it useful in your day pastime. So , let's have it and revel in reading.

Francis Gibbs:

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