

Jamesland



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著者:Michelle Huneven

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Book Description

Jamesland, the buoyant second novel by Michelle Huneven, critically acclaimed author of Round Rock, is a witty, sophisticated, and deeply humane comedy of unlikely redemption.

When thirty-three-year-old Alice Black discovers a deer in her dining room after fighting with her boyfriend, she wonders if she's going crazy. Pete Ross, forty-six, knows he's crazy. He's wrecked his marriage, slashed his wrists, and done time in a psychiatric institution, and now he's being cared for by his mother, who's a nun.

Forty-five-year-old Helen Harland, a spirited Unitarian Universalist minister, is being driven crazy by her hostile church administration. Living in Los Feliz, California, the three meet at Helen's Wednesday midweek services. Though initially incompatible, the sheer force of Helen's idiosyncratic ministering (her "variety show of religious experience")-paired with Alice's illustrious ancestor William James-proves to be a catalyst for friendship and a kind of transcendence. Generous and compassionate, Michelle Huneven delivers a joyful new novel about love, faith, and a few wayward souls waiting for life to begin.

From the Inside Flap

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From Publishers Weekly

Like her critically acclaimed *Round Rock*, Huneven's sophomore effort explores a tightly knit community of troubled eccentrics. In the Los Angeles neighborhood of Los Feliz, a motley handful of residents attends Helen Harland's casual and inclusive services at the local Unitarian church. Helen—who can't interest her boyfriend in her preaching profession, and who battles the church board over matters such as men holding hands in the sanctuary—has her own struggles with faith, yet finds herself inspiring it in some of Los Feliz's other lonely souls. There's Alice Black, hot off a string of bad love affairs (including one with the husband of a local movie star) and living in a house belonging to her great-aunt Kate. The intermittently lucid Kate, now ensconced in a rest home, is still pursuing a life-long writing project related to her illustrious ancestor, the philosopher William James. And then there's crazy Pete Ross, a failed husband, father and chef now living with his mother, a nun, as part of his therapy. Spunky Helen maneuvers dinners and other get-togethers where people seemingly at odds grow (warmly and predictably) to know and love one another. More intelligent and quirky than the usual melodrama, this novel succeeds in exploring the slow and halting journey to self-acceptance. But this level of realism also becomes problematic: the narrative is slow-going, and the author's fondness for flashbacks further decelerates the plot. The theological conversations and the extensive information about William James may also be a turn-off for some readers. For those who are patient, however, this is a gentle, well-turned story of the search for redemption.

From Booklist

Shambling, disheveled Pete Ross is haunted by a question: "How do people live in this world?" Once a successful restaurateur with a loving wife and child, his world imploded after his restaurant failed; he has recently been released into his mother's care after an extended stay in a psychiatric facility. Bartender Alice Black, long on the run from her storied heritage as a descendent of William James, is entangled in a dead-end relationship with a married man. Both Pete and Alice find themselves attending the church services of new minister Helen Harland, who is refreshingly down-to-earth but also depressed by her hidebound parishioners' resistance to her new programming ideas. The three enter into a most unlikely friendship centered on Pete's mouthwatering meals and their scintillating, hilarious discussions about, well, how

people live in this world. In some small measure, the friendship helps each of them to move ahead and to throw off restrictions imposed by fear, confusion, or pride. In her second novel, following Round Rock (1997), Huneven brings to the page a fiery intelligence about a whole host of topics, including dream psychology and gourmet cooking. With its wry, generous take on human nature, this is, ultimately, a deeply moving novel.

Joanne Wilkinson

About Author

Michelle Huneven received a Whiting Writers' Award in 2002, and has also won a GE Younger Writers Award in Fiction and a James Beard Award. She is presently a restaurant reviewer for the LA Weekly. Her first novel, Round Rock, was named a New York Times Notable Book and a Los Angeles Times Best Book of the Year. She lives in Altadena, California.

Book Dimension

Height (mm) 210 Width (mm) 128

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