

Trailer Trash, With a Girl's Name

Stacey Roberts

Sons of Joy (Feb 28, 2014)

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Jump in the family Winnebago and join Stacey Roberts on a hilarious and touching trip through a trailer-trash childhood.

This hilarious book, *Trailer Trash, With a Girl's Name*, is based on author Stacey Roberts's life. It's a gut-busting, side-splitting story that begins with Roberts's premature birth and then shares his family's experiences living in a Winnebago. This memoir is sure to make even the most cantankerous reader giggle, chuckle, or laugh out loud.

Roberts was born a preemie and, according to his mother, was not expected to live. But he does survive and thrive as best as can be expected, living with a mother who is a horrible cook, an older brother known as "Layne the Favorite," and his mother's various boyfriends and husbands, including Ted the Drug Dealer. Ted decides to buy a Winnebago, and the family spends five years touring the country and living in California and Florida.

Roberts has created an unforgettable cast of characters that borders on caricatures. Most have a descriptor with their names, which can change. Ted the Lightbulb Salesman becomes Ted the Idle when he quits his job, and then later morphs into Ted the Drug Dealer. Roberts also has a flair for humorous writing. He speaks of changing his name: "I needed the manliest of man names to go with my deepening voice and sudden werewolf-like hairiness." Some quirks need no exaggeration, such as his mom's tendency to mess up names and draw out her s, as in "SSSSStace." Other things he alters or exaggerates for a laugh, such as his insults toward his mother's cooking: "My mother's kasha and bowties tasted like the wretched tears of a first-day prison inmate after lights out."

The writing is straightforward and easy to follow. Roberts uses numbered lists throughout the book instead of just naming the items in the narrative, both drawing attention to and simplifying the reason for the list. This is a pleasant way to communicate the writer's intentions. Instead of using sentences to include the many manly monikers he could change his name to (from the feminine name of Stacey) and his mother's responses to him, Roberts writes:

1. *Dirk Steel (Too metallic)*
2. Duke Rottweiler (That's a dog's name)
3. Wolfgang Hammerstrike (That's a wolf's name)
4. Gunner Ironcannon (We're not Vikings)
5. Layne (That's your brother's name. What is wrong with you?)

The back cover tells just enough about the contents to be enticing, and the interior text is laid out in a visually appealing manner. One thing is overdone, and that is Roberts's tendency to tell a story and, in a later chapter, retell it in a shorter fashion, but with too much information. A reference to his mother's arsenic poisoning would be enough, but he states multiple times how she got poisoned.

Touching, disturbing at times, and all around fun, *Trailer Trash, with a Girl's Name* is an enjoyable ride.

BETH VANHOUTEN (April 14, 2014)

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