



Freak Show

James St. James

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Billy Bloom is gay, but it's mostly theoretical, as he hasn't had much experience. When he has to move to Florida, he can't believe his bad luck. His new school is a mix of bible belles, amberzombies, and football heroes -- none of which are exactly his type.

Billy's efforts to fit in and stand out at the same time are both hilarious and heart warming. In this novel from adult author and media personality James St. James, readers are in for a wild ride as he tells Billy's fascinating story of bravado, pain, and unexpected love, inspired by his own experiences.

Freak Show Details

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Author : James St. James

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From Reader Review Freak Show for online ebook

Karin says

Billy Bloom has been forced to move to Florida for his Senior year of High School. His mom, a little on the bi-polar side, couldn't take his flamboyant attitude toward life anymore. Billy is a self-proclaimed "Gender Obscurist". A fabulously creative drag queen and a character that is resilient, lovable, and stronger than anyone ever would have imagined, including himself.

After enduring unspeakable torture and bullying from his shell-shocked classmates, Billy ends up in the hospital and has a month long recuperating period. During this time, Billy develops a deep friendship with Flip Kelly, the star and golden boy of the high school. Flip, the one who saved Billy from the angry mob of students and whisked him to the hospital. Flip, who is feeling the pressure to be the best from his family and the entire school. Flip, the guy Billy falls head-over-heels in love with.

Billy relates his experiences at Eisenhower Academy with brutal honesty and laugh-out-loud humor. His decision to run for Homecoming Queen proves to be a true test of his character, strength, and resolve. Billy's message of tolerance and acceptance is important for everyone to hear. After all, "Gender is a choice, not a life sentence."

No matter your gender persuasion, FREAK SHOW by James St. James is a delightful story of bravery, trust, love, and friendship. So, put on your tiara and platform shoes and settle in for a FABULOUS ride.

Autumn says

Super fun story of teen drag queen Billy Bloom, who is stuck in red-state Florida ALAS! Billy is a spunky hero/ine who is estranged from his parents, beaten up at school and also a bit bipolar. But his story is never downbeat -- the saddest events are frankly discussed and summarily dismissed with a La La La and another glob of glitter.

Tucked inside the first person narrative, you will find beauty tips (use surgical glue to attach metal to your skin), outlandish quips and a few canape recipes. Billy is totally self absorbed, but what teenager isn't? Thanks to James St. James for breaking new ground in YA lit and teaching us about Pensacola Petit Fours at the same time.

Melissa **Just Really Loves Musicals**** says**

EVERYBODY PICK THIS BOOK UP RIGHT NOW. I'm not kidding. People need to read this. This book is so underrated and unknown and it needs to become more famous. I listened to this on audible and it was the best decision I've ever made. This audiobook was incredible. The narrator did a BRILLIANT job of bringing Billy's voice to life. I don't think I would've loved this book nearly as much if I had read it rather than listened to it.

I admit in the very beginning it was a bit weird and slow, and I wasn't sure what to think. But after a little while of getting to know Billy's voice, I was hooked. Billy is the character I never knew I needed. A lot of the overly camp, flamboyant, drag type characters I see on tv I find a little irritating, but not Billy. I loved him immediately. The prose in this story makes this book. It's honestly hilarious; I rarely laugh out loud to books but this one really had me laughing, or smiling constantly. It was also super sad, with the bullying and the homophobia. But Billy was such a strong character.

Without spoiling anything, my hands down favourite part of this book was the friendship element. Mainly between him and Flip, but also Billy and Blah Blah Blah too (just one of the hilarious parts of this book was the name Blah Blah Blah, that got me every time!) Flip was such a little precious darling, I adored him, and he's my newest book boyfriend (view spoiler).

The ending was brilliant and made me so so happy. People, people, please read this book. You won't regret it.

Now, I'm off to find the movie, because I NEED to watch it.

Allyson says

Freak Show is the story of Billy Bloom: Self-Proclaimed Superfreak and his journey through his senior year of high school. Told from the first person point of view, Billy invites the reader to question normalcy and encourage acceptance.

In the beginning of the story, the reader learns that Billy has been banished from his mother's home for unknown reasons, and he has come to live with his rich father in Florida. However, Billy is not the everyday high school senior boy. He is gay, admittedly un-athletic, and has a tendency to dress in drag. When he arrives at his first day of school at Eisenhower Academy dressed like a pirate (complete with gold tooth and mascara), it is needless to say that Billy is not met with open arms. In fact, after a few days, he is beat into a coma and has to spend the next month recuperating at home. Enter Flip Kelly, star football player who saved Billy from near death and agrees to tutor him while he is out of school. What follows is the uproariously funny and creative account of their developing friendship and Billy's eventual acceptance of what he has always most feared – himself.

This book is great for anyone looking to read “outside-the-box.” There is certainly some questionable material, but it is not distasteful. (Check with your parents first!) Billy's character offers the reader a heartfelt connection to anyone who has ever wanted to feel accepted for who they are. I loved Billy's voice because he is comedic and sarcastic, but also true and intelligent. There were continuous references to pop culture, like when Billy is introducing himself and says, “Seventeen years old. Fabulous beyond fabulous. Total future icon. Gifted, yes, but just short of genius. Mad verbal skills, though. I watch a lot of Gilmore Girls” (9). The fact that St. James included things in the story that are popular right now made Billy's character and his story even more real.

While I sometimes believed Billy's actions and choices to be a little over the top, I never doubted the sincerity of what St. James is trying to accomplish with this book. Billy puts it best himself when he says, “We are all freaks. Yes! Alone in our rooms at night, we are all weirdoes and outcasts and losers. That is what being a teenager is all about! Whether you admit it or not, you are all worried that the others won't accept you, that if they knew the real you, they would recoil in horror. Each of us carries with us a secret

shame that we think is somehow unique...And if we are, each of us, freaks – then can't we accept what's different in each other and move on?" (247-248). This book is about acceptance and understanding, and what high school student isn't looking for that?

Ulysses Dietz says

Billy Bloom may just be the most frustrating character in the history of LGBT/YA novels.

And yet, how could I not love him?

Billy is rich and oblivious. And extremely nelly. And a drag queen. At seventeen. Having been suddenly shipped to southern Florida by his crazy mother to stay with his grouchy, disapproving father in the family's ancestral mansion, Billy suddenly finds himself in a snooty private school full of blond conformists and jocks.

Not the least of whom is Flip Kelly. Football star. Blond, blue-eyed. The whole nine yards.

But this arch, funny, harrowing and ultimately moving novel is really not about a gay teenager into extreme drag; it's about agency. James St. James (irritating, assuredly fake name, but OK, I'll just take a deep breath) has taken a standard LGBT/YA story about a sissy boy falling for a big gentle jock and turned it inside out.

Billy is clueless, but he's also fierce. He is narcissistic but also kind. He is so oblivious he refers to the one girl in school who's nice to him as Blah Blah Blah, until he finally learns her name: This is simply one step in Billy's gradual apotheosis into self-awareness.

"The choice is yours."

There is violence and teenage meanness of the worst sort in this book. But, as in other YA books, there is redemption and the genuine love of a few good people who literally save Billy's life. But, in the end, it is Billy who takes charge of his own destiny.

"These moments are going to keep coming, and it's how you react to them that defines you."

"But God," I asked, trembling, "how do I bring reason to the anger and chaos, when its reasons are hidden from me?" And God said: "You forgive."

Inside the chaotic silliness that is Billy Bloom's world, there is a powerful soul. It is about survival, not just to survive, but to make the world better with your own insane courage.

Really pretty remarkable.

hhhhhhhh says

"Mary Sue, sometimes shortened simply to Sue, is a pejorative term used to describe a fictional character who plays a major role in the plot and is particularly characterized by overly idealized and hackneyed mannerisms, lacking noteworthy flaws, and primarily functioning as wish-fulfillment fantasies for their authors. Perhaps the single underlying feature of all characters described as "Mary Sues" is that they are too ostentatious for the audience's taste, or that the author seems to favor the character too highly. The author may seem to push how exceptional and wonderful the "Mary Sue" character is on his or her audience, sometimes leading the audience to dislike or even resent the character fairly quickly; such a character could be described as an "author's pet" (Mary Sue. (2008, December 3). In Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia. Retrieved December 3, 2008, from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mary_Sue/)

If JSJ had concentrated on actually empathizing with teens and not lived out a fantasy wish fulfillment, this book would have been awesome. He's a great writer, fun to read, and can build suspense, and you naturally want to love this character for being a plucky hero/ine, but everyone around him's a flat cartoon stereotype to serve his needs and he comes off as unbearably narcissistic.

That said, I would recommend this to teens who want their own fantasy wish fulfillment, which is why a lot of us read anyway. It's trashy fiction and there's nothing wrong with that, and who doesn't enjoy seeing a transgendered teenager rise above the rednecks and religious nuts? But... it coulda been so awesome! I want him to hang out with some real kids and write a better one; we definitely need more fun lgbtq ya novels.

Rebecca McNutt says

Freak Show is a great book about a kid trying to belong at his new high school, but some of the phrases and slang made absolutely no sense at all. It was like Urban Dictionary or something. "Aberzombie"? I don't know, maybe terminology like that is just from a different era or generation or something. Either way, this is still an impressive and unforgettable novel.

chandler ainsley ✿ says

ONE OF MY FAVORITE BOOKS OF ALL TIME IS BEING MADE INTO A MOVIE!!!!!!!

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tTfrm...>

Book Concierge says

Billy Bloom is a gay teenager who has recently moved to Florida. It's bad enough being the new kid at school when you are a senior, but being an emerging drag queen at an ultra-rich, ultra-conservative school is even more challenging. Billy tries to make friends but the teasing, taunting and bullying he has to endure get out of hand quickly. Deciding that he has to be himself and speak up (and out loud) for all those other "shadow kids" trying to get along by not being noticed, Billy makes a momentous decision – he's going to run for Homecoming Queen!

There is a nugget of a great story here. Billy's situation is shared by many teens, who struggle with being themselves and also fitting in (or at least not being bullied, harassed, beaten up). His efforts are sometimes

hilariously funny, sometimes incredibly touching, and sometimes so very inappropriate that they took me completely aback. I found myself alternately cheering for Billy and cringing at his antics. He was so over-the-top and the other students such caricatures that the important message here was somewhat lost in the glitter and drama.

The writing is, frankly, not very good. I nearly gave up after just a couple of pages because I am way past the teenage years and not very interested in wallowing in teen angst and self-absorption. But it's a very fast read, and I flew through it. The young adult audience will probably enjoy it more.

Nicky says

Billy Bloom is a self-proclaimed "Gender Obscurist" living a happy life in Connecticut. When his mother sends him to live with his father in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, things take a turn for the worst. Billy is a fabulously flamboyant drag queen who doesn't believe in toning things down, even in his new wealthy and conservative community. After his first day at the Dwight D. Eisenhower High School however, Billy comes to the realization that he is at the bottom of the food chain. He has become a target for everyone ? even the people who don't fit in themselves. From the first day, he is physically and mentally attacked for his style, speech, and personality while the teachers look the other way. In a final attempt to put an end to the homophobia, Billy decides to go to school in the most outrageous drag. Unfortunately, this doesn't work out as planned and he ends up in the hospital with broken bones after being brutally beaten. Though the altercation takes him out of school for a few weeks, Billy gains the admiration and friendship of attractive football player Flip Kelly, and Blah Blah Blah, a girl who doesn't stick to the status-quo. With renewed hope and his personal Latin mottos for? "I myself forgive myself" and "They condemn what they do not understand"? Billy goes at it again. He decides to run for Homecoming Queen with the strong declaration that "Gender is a choice, not a life sentence."

This book was amazingly well written and allowed me to completely understand Billy's unique personality. He's real, he's honest, and he's very vulnerable which makes him such a likable character. He is also quite funny which adds comic relief amidst many controversial issues like homophobia and transgenderism. Initially, Billy's personality was a bit exaggerated and the story even seemed a bit "typical." But author James St. James throws curve-balls and creates a character so utterly exceptional, you'd wish he was real. The novel also has a very sweet, unexpected ending which if nothing else, makes it worth the read. James St. James constructs the perfect high class, waspy high school and throws Billy in to fend for himself. This novel deals with real issues and if I wasn't laughing, I was sobbing. The detail and descriptions don't leave much to be imagined and readers will cheer for Billy and cry with him as he struggles to find a place for himself.

Christian says

At the beginning of his senior year, Billy Bloom's mother sends him to live with his father in Florida where he is enrolled in an elitist, private school. Moving into a new school before your senior year can just suck. But not for Billy. Because Billy is *fabulous*. And by fabulous, I mean he is a teen drag queen.

Now. I had issues getting into this book. The writing style isn't so bad. Billy's voice is strong. Very strong. (I guess that's to be expected of a drag queen, truth be told.) But I just don't like Billy. Then again, I have a hard time relating to characters (and, I'm discovering, people) who create their own problems because they just won't get it. Why on earth would anyone think it's a good idea to go to your first day at a new school dressed as a pirate? And not just any pirate, but a pirate that makes Captain Jack Sparrow look straight. So it really shouldn't be any surprise to him that he gets beat nearly to death when he dresses as a swamp bride.

Of course, without such setbacks, we wouldn't get to know Billy, although he really does come across as fairly shallow. The book finally gets interesting toward the end when Billy decides to run for Homecoming Queen. (Hmm. I guess I should have warned you about that being a spoiler, but I think that I might have been less frustrated throughout the first part of the book had I known that this would be the actual plot element we working toward.) That part actually gets interesting, especially how he manages to manipulate the school political systems, demonstrating that he (or at least his fag hag) has some capacity for strategic planning.

Anyway, it's a good book to read if you want to see a character with a strong voice. But he'll likely just frustrate the hell out of you because of how little common sense he has.

Elece says

what can i say? it's a beautiful, funny, tragic, wonderful, engaging, enchanting, delicious story.

WHAT ARE YOU DOING STILL READING THIS??? GO! GET THEE TO A BOOKSTORE!!!

READ FREAKSHOW. YOU CAN THANK ME LATER.

Isaiah says

See more of my reviews at <http://mibookreviews.wordpress.com/>

I was very excited about this book and I tried hard to like it. The main problem was the main character, Billy Bloom, was so damn unlikeable that I was hoping he didn't survive. He was over dramatic, self absorbed, annoying, a drama queen (haha bad pun, yes), and probably knew nothing about actually doing drag as he was hated by everyone. There was no way that he would have been able to have the skill that the author gave him and there was no way that many of the things in the plot that barely mattered would have happened.

I could probably rant all night about why this book was terrible, but I will break it down into a list to save time:

1. Billy Bloom needs to shut up. He is not cute like he thinks, it is a miracle that I didn't beat him up. I was an out "tranny" as he would say all through high school and had no friends and even I wouldn't be friends with him.
2. The use of transphobic and homophobic language as ok and perfectly normal by the main character.
3. The author not understanding that transsexuals (people who change their birth sex to another) and drag queens (usually gay men who dress in women's clothing as a performance) are not the same thing. Transsexual people have a higher suicide rate and people wonder why. Drag queens can stop being queens

when they feel like it (Billy did not have to wear dresses or anything else, he chose to do this). A transsexual has not choice.

4. The author not understanding basic transsexual anything. A person under the age of 18 can't start hormones without parental consent and transwomen do not take injections. The author has one transwoman under the age of 18 asking Billy for help in a fan letter saying that she takes hormone injections. This is not how the process works and many transwomen (like Kate Bornstein) will tell you that transwomen and drag queens generally do not get along or they do not respect each other.

5. The inability to hold a love plot for more than a few pages is astounding. Billy is lusted after by all of the gay men in the school, I call BS. There is no way that all of the cute boys around Billy are gay and want him. He is annoying and he sexually harasses many of the boys as a way of bonding.

6. The level of sexual harassment that is seen as normal and even cute by the main character. Calling another boy "lover" loudly in the hallway and touching him without permission is not acceptable, but the character thinks it is cute.

7. Billy Bloom would likely have PTSD or refuse to go back to school. Instead he goes back repeatedly and even makes himself more of a target. That is not how being a teenager or a gay teenager works. Billy would be too traumatized to function after nearly being killed that he wouldn't have gone in a dress again. The mental stability and character of the characters is not believable. I get more realism about humans from Dr. Suss

Overall, this book was a waste of time and has made me incredibly angry. It sounded like a book that I would have liked and would have praised. Sadly, the author fell short, which I should have expected considering the travesty that was Party Monster (though I was hoping that it was the movie that was terrible instead of the original book, but now I see that this author has a thing for annoying and unlikable over dramatic and stereotypically gay characters). If you know anything about transsexuals or drag queens, I do not recommend this book. If you like reading books that have a main character that has some redeeming quality, look elsewhere. I wish I could say even one nice thing about this book, but the only thing I can say is thank goodness I did not spend money on this.

Tfitoby says

I could tell you why I read this but then again I couldn't really explain it. Apparently James St. James is slightly famous in reality programming but I know him from that movie Party Monster where he was played by Seth Green opposite Macauley Culkin (Mac was good in this role, I thought he could actually act.) I enjoyed the movie and apparently it was based on the true crime anecdote/biography of James St. James - Disco Bloodbath. Knowing what kind of experiences the guy has had in real life gave me a pretty good idea of what to expect from this novel.

So I'm not rating this because of its GLBT content and I'm not rating this because it wasn't violent or crazy like his movie. It gets the low rating because it was DULLSVILLE. Tres tres SHINY but nothing more than that. It was **all surface and no feeling**, the cliched teen movie story of the outsider being accepted, the geek getting the girl, GLAMMED UP, covered in SPARKLES and given a SUPERFREAK protagonist, with an ending borrowed from SIXTEEN CANDLES.

It got me hooked by being **fantastically funny**, laugh out loud giggly type of funny, to start with; then I kept waiting for it to get interesting or funny again and it didn't, **it just sort of went on and on and on and on and on and on and on and on and on and on and on** and then thankfully it was over. Still, it was a quick read with

massive print and lots of large paragraph breaks meaning 298 pages flew past in the time it might usually take me to read 120.

Maybe it would have worked better as movie, movies work well without any feeling under the shiny shiny surface of thirty year olds pretending that they're 17 but a novel, even in the diary entry format presented here should really offer a little more. It seems that perhaps the extremely funny Emma Stone movie Easy A may have been slightly influenced by the tone and structure of this book (not that its original) but made a lot more straight. Hollywood can take sparkly non-threatening vampires but not Hedwig: The High School Years. And shame on them as James St. James **preaches acceptance and inclusion for all**, including religious zealots, a message that is frequently proffered but rarely heard it seems. **Witness the truly archaic, hate fueled behaviour in North Carolina recently.**

Sam says

Billy Bloom is a fabulous drag queen of a teenager who finds himself out of luck when his mother sends him off to live with his rich father in the rural Florida swamps for his last year of high school. Surrounded by a family who doesn't accept him, students who are horrified by him or praying on his behalf, and constant physical threats, Billy decides to take it upon himself to shake up his private institution and make progress for the GLBTQ community.

I read this book very soon after it came into my collection because I immediately saw the potential for complaints from the more conservative members of the community. The bright pink cover with the cross-dressing boy doll really grabs your attention. This book is definitely meant for the older teen sector; there is a fairly graphic part describing a group attack on Billy that leaves him nearly dead, as well as a fair amount of blue language scattered throughout. Billy himself is 100% over the top (swap queen and Carrie themed outfits, a homecoming float that is literally a 13 foot high purple platform shoe), but as someone who had a Billy of her own as a close friend through the high school years I find his voice to be very authentic of a serious teen queen. The book is able to explore the raw nature of bigotry but still be upbeat. Billy is a drag queen and the focus of the book is on how this community comes to terms with it, but the focus is not as much on gay relationships or sexuality. It's just one eccentric boy's coming of age story.
