



# Please Excuse My Daughter

*Julie Klam*

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**Please Excuse My Daughter** Julie Klam

**A woman's hilarious, bittersweet account of growing up in a family of career-shunning, dependence-seeking women and her journey to a state of twenty-first-century self-reliance.**

Julie Klam was raised as the only daughter of a Jewish family in the exclusive WASP stronghold of Bedford, New York. Her mother was sharp, glamorous, and funny, but did not think that work was a woman's responsibility. Her father was fully supportive, not just of his wife's staying at home, but also of her extravagant lifestyle. Her mother's offbeat parenting style-taking Julie out of school to go to lunch at Bloomingdale's, for example-made her feel well-cared-for (and well-dressed) but left her unprepared for graduating and entering the real world. She had been brought up to look pretty and wait for a rich man to sweep her off her feet. But what happened if he never showed up?

When Julie gets married to a hardworking but not wealthy man-one who expects her to be part of a modern couple and contribute financially to the marriage-she realizes how ambivalent and ill-equipped she is for life. Once she gives birth to a daughter, she knows she must grow up, get to work, and teach her child the self-reliance that she never learned.

Delivered in an uproariously funny, sweet, self-effacing, and utterly memorable voice, *Please Excuse My Daughter* is a bighearted memoir from an irresistible new writer.

## Please Excuse My Daughter Details

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Author : Julie Klam

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# From Reader Review Please Excuse My Daughter for online ebook

## Jess Saunders says

Cute, quick read.

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## Edan says

First thing's first: My household is obsessed with Julie Klam. Patrick and I talk about her all the time (really), and Omar's collar reads: WWJKD? (What would Julie Klam do?). All three of us liked this book, and we all adore Julie as a human being. Anyone who becomes my husband's #1 Blog Fan is golden in my book (and Omar's).

I never read memoirs, mostly because I'm partial to made up stories about people, or nonfiction about things I can eat, so I don't have much to compare this one to. I can say that this book is incredibly entertaining, and moving too (oh lord, one part, about Otto, made me weep over my plate of fried rice at the local noodle house!). Ms. Klam is incredibly charming, and over and over again I fantasized about meeting up with her for lunch, to complain about the slog that is novel writing and my lack of money. She would understand me, and afterwards we could go to Loehmann's to buy party dresses!

If you (Julie!) wonder why I'm not giving the book 4 or 5 stars, it's because the language didn't wow me. There are many cliched phrases (of the "my heart was broken" variety), and overall the prose had a workman-like feel to it. I know this won't matter to many readers, but I live for sentences, and I just didn't find enough to drool over in this. I feel like Klam could be among the great comic essayists, but first the words gotta go the distance. Also, sometimes the chapters took on a "then this happened, then this happened" feel, which I suppose is inevitable when you're writing your life story.

I recommend this book to anyone who's trying to find their way in this nutty world (um, everyone), and to anyone who wants a delightful read (this book reminded me a little of Elaine Dundy's novel *The Dud Avocado*, if that helps). I identified with Julie (for instance: I hated my honeymoon too!), and when I didn't, I loved learning about the world from her perspective.

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## Meghan says

This is a laugh out loud memoir about a Jewish American Princess, and I say that only because she calls herself that. It's a quick read, it's funny, and it has some solemn moments as well that make you sit and take notice of your own life. In the end, she finds that she does, in fact, have more capabilities than just shopping at Bergdorf's and avoiding having to work. She finds meaning... in herself. She's self deprecating, she's nonjudgemental of those who may judge her, and ultimately, she is not nearly as self absorbed as many people in my generation. I really enjoyed this book, and since I didn't bother with the laundry and I felt annoyed whenever I was taken away from reading it, AND I finished it in a day... well, it's a terrific, light-hearted way to look at life, even when it isn't terrific or light-hearted.

I just wonder... could I get Klam's therapist's number? She seems fantastic! ;)

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## **Barbara says**

This is one of my favorite books of all time!!

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## **Deirdre says**

I love honest memoirs, and PLEASE EXCUSE MY DAUGHTER is so very honest, and so very funny. I enjoyed this book from the first chapter, in which the author talks about how nice it would be to retire to Florida with her grandfather, never mind that she is 30 years old. I can definitely relate. The 30's are hard for anyone, especially if you're a woman who wants to make something of yourself, and, as in this author's case, you haven't yet done so. Julie Klam's journey to make something of herself is funny, heartbreaking and insightful, especially in an age where many smart and educated women, for some strange reason, still seem to want to rely on their husbands to make the money, have the career, and provide the intellectual stimulation in the relationship. Julie Klam's very-worth-reading memoir transcends her own life and should be read as an inspirational tale for all women who, whether married or single or mothers or not, still want to make it on their own.

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## **Nicky says**

I both identify with and am very jealous of, Julie Klam. I was born to write for Pop-Up Video. Or anything on Vh-1, for that matter. But enough about me. There are some genuine laugh-out-loud moments in this book, which I treasure. Julie Klam's conversational style made this a comfortable read and I found myself rooting for her the whole way. This is an enjoyable book with enough substance so you won't feel all empty inside when you're done. You'll just wish for more.

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## **Anita Dalton says**

Klam is a woman who self-admittedly had difficulty growing up, but even when her parents cut the financial cord, that cord cutting included a job at her dad's insurance agency. She had the best clothes, a huge support network and did I mention she is thin and pretty? Yet she had no idea what she wanted to do with her life, sort of embraced her lack of ambition and ran with it for years. She was as foreign to me as a Martian. Her whole life until her early 30s was a refutation to everything I lived. It was like, through the printed page, Julie Klam was shouting, Hey you! You over there! The short, chubby one who put herself through school on loans and selling shoes, the one who had a job at 14 and has never once worn Halston. My long thin legs and I give the finger to you and your Protestant work ethic! Gah, I hated her. I threw the book across the room and ran a hot bath. And spite of myself, I picked the book back up and started reading again. And dammit if I didn't start liking Klam a little. She's got a dry wit, a self-effacing humor, and an ability to spin a yarn about the mundane and make it entertaining. She's also sort of charming. Read the rest of the review here: <http://ireadoddbooks.com/ire/please-e...>

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## Holly says

Allow me to preface this review by stating the fact that typically, I enjoy memoirs. Memoirs, in my opinion, mark the struggles, triumphs, courage and stamina of a person. They signify a life that has truly been lived and allow a person to share their lives with others who may benefit from reading their story.

Julie Klam was born and raised in a Jewish family where her mother and many other Jewish wives and women in general believed that women did not work. Instead, they married rich men, spent their husband's money on luxuries that purely benefit the way they look and eat and nothing else and have a few children before they are expected to get a job and contribute to their families. Julie was not only raised in this lifestyle, she inhabited this lifestyle and truly made it her own.

Her mother frequently took her out of school so she could go shopping and wear the best clothes out of all of the girls she went to school with because she was raised thinking that that was the important part of life—the best clothes, the best hair, the best nails and so on. Because of her upbringing, Julie did not receive the education that she deserved as a young child growing up.

As every adult knows, there comes a time when you need to become an adult; to grow up and take responsibility for your life and eventually, for your family. Sadly, Julie Klam never did break away from the way she was raised and instead, formed a lifestyle around fear and laziness.

On the back cover of Julie Klam's memoir, *Please Excuse My Daughter*, you will see a laundry list of pseudo-accomplishments. She had attended NYU's Tisch School of the Arts, where it was a requirement of hers to watch a countless number of movies. She was an intern at *Late Night with David Letterman*, she landed her first "real" job at VH1 on the popular music video show, *Pop Up Video*, where she met and later married the show's producer, Paul Leo. It was for *Pop Up Video* that she received an Emmy nomination for Outstanding Special Class Writing; however, as good as "Emmy Nominated Writer" looks by your name, she simply received that nomination in conjunction with the rest of the writing staff of the show. Since then, she was also published in *O: The Oprah Magazine*, *Harper's Bazaar*, *Glamour* and *Rolling Stone*, although you learn in her book that her close friend works for *Rolling Stone*, so it is obvious to see how she landed that gig.

Julie Klam's life has been a series of excuses. Excuses as to why she had never had a real job that she could stick with and not because she simply enjoys the life of freelancing, but because she is simply incapable of being an adult. Throughout her memoir, where at 257 pages, was 256 pages too long, Julie whines, complains and feels sorry for herself for not being able to highlight her hair or go to Saks; she is truly her mother's daughter.

Julie Klam simply wrote an entire memoir based upon what most "mommy bloggers" are writing about now, yet most mommy bloggers are far more entertaining and don't lose their reader after a few posts. As a matter of a fact, Heather Armstrong of *Dooce* did write a book and from what I have been hearing, it's a hell of a lot more interesting to a broader range of people than what the reviews of *Please Excuse My Daughter* are receiving across the board.

While *Please Excuse My Daughter* is written very well and some of the times is absolutely hilarious, Julie Klam's memoir is long, dry and sticks to your throat as you try to swallow it. In my (most humble) opinion, I

believe that the next time Julie Klam finds herself in another slump and needs money desperately, instead of writing a memoir (because this one surely is not going to make her the millions she lies awake dreaming of at night) she should opt for children's books. She has a wonderful sense of humor and a talent for writing humor and should apply her talents to something not so involved; something that will not let her drag out a story and pretend it is epic when it simply falls flat.

Taken from Julie's own blog, in a post written about Goodreads, a site where people are able to keep track of the books they want to read, have read and write reviews, you can tell what a self-assured woman Klam is when she responds to those who do not enjoy her book and agree with her that she is brilliant by saying, "...I'm thinking of leaving the Author Program, too, because I want to write nasty things to people who give my book low ratings and I don't want them to know it's me. (Like "Sorry, I didn't write the book for half-wits.")  
You know?"

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### **Roxanne says**

This was a fun book, I guess. I think I just need to stop reading memoirs by privileged white women. Julie was raised to be a princess, to find a rich husband, so she had trouble finding and keeping a job, developing work skills, and surviving on her own. She had to rely on her rich parents for most her adulthood, until after she married and had a daughter of her own and realized she wanted to take responsibility for her life and raise her daughter differently than she was raised. So she got her act together and established her career as a freelance writer--at like 38 years old, which means she spent almost 20 years mostly freeloading off her parents. I don't deny she went through some hard times, but still. The woman lived in an apartment her daddy bought her, saw a NYC therapist for 20 years, and never held a steady job for longer than a few months except for when she worked for her dad's insurance company. Not like I'm Miss Queen of Hardships or anything, but I was actually delighted when Julie and her husband had the baby and started having financial trouble and got a taste of how most people actually live. Which Julie was able to fix relatively quickly in just a few paragraphs as soon as she really put her mind to it. I think I would have liked her better if she'd figured it out a decade earlier, but then I suppose it wouldn't have made much of a book. Don't get me wrong, the book is well written, and it is really funny, but I definitely wanted to strangle this woman on several occasions.

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### **Patrick Brown says**

So why not 5 stars? Here's my overly-lawyerly explanation. If I gave this book 5 stars, everybody would be like, "Oh, sure, Patrick, you gave that book 5 stars because you have, a link exchange thing going with Julie, not because you really liked the book." I guess I thought by giving the book 4 stars, you'd all see that I was rating based on merit alone, and would be more likely to heed my review. I don't know, maybe it's a flawed strategy. I really liked this book. I think everybody should read it (I mean not everybody. If you're a self-important ass hole, then by all means, don't), and I think everybody would like it.

For me, reading a memoir should illicit a couple of responses. One should be plain old recognition. In almost everything I've read and loved, I've found something of myself in it. And man, I'm all over this book. "Lacking motivation and failing to find employment suited to your abilities?" Check. "Depression caused by endless hours of daytime TV in lieu of a job?" Oh, yeah. I've been there. "Quoting liberally from the movie

Diner so as to alienate all people not in the know?" You better believe I've done that. Seriously, there were moments when I felt like Julie Klam had been spying on my life, then wrote about it. But what makes a great memoir great is that it takes those circumstances, those moments that everyone's felt, and expresses them like no one has before. Klam does that over and over again.

You'll hear about the humor in this book, and it is funny (I laughed out loud quite a few times), but what got me is that the humor doesn't overwhelm the other emotions on display. There are moments in this book that are heartbreaking. Klam lets them play. She doesn't use every instance as a chance to make a cheap joke, and when she does decide to crack a joke, you'll just want to sob.

It's really a great book. I read it in 3 days, and looked forward to it every minute. If I had one complaint, it's that the conceit of the book, that Klam's mother didn't prepare her for adult life because she was busy pampering her through childhood, doesn't hold up throughout the book. It comes together nicely at the end when Klam becomes a mother, but there are moments when that thread seems gone altogether. That's not much of a criticism, in that the book doesn't need that central conceit.

Everybody should read this book. I'll stop rambling now.

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### **Jill says**

Funny and well written. This is a fun, very light read. I found the author unbelievably self-absorbed and was really disturbed by the somewhat off-hand manner in which she tells of her abortion. Still, I think she comes around a bit and was glad that she seems to be happily married. I had lots of laughs reading it. This isn't the book for you if you're looking for anything deep.

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### **Jackie says**

For me to give two stars to a memoir is pretty rare. It is my favorite genre (sp?). However, for a memoir to keep my interest, the person needs to have a) been through extenuating life circumstances that are interesting to read about or b) if they have a lame life, at least write about it in a witty manner. This book failed on both accounts. This woman (who surprisingly wrote for Letterman and pop up video) wrote a pretty bland memoir that left me wondering how it even got published....I would skip this book. There are definitely better memoirs out there.

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### **Mare says**

I read this witty yet totally relatable memoir this past wkend. Yes, I was raised by a mother with the same type of philosophy as Julie's mom. My mother always felt a woman should only go to college for her "Mrs" degree and that a man was to handle all expenses and a woman just needed to look pretty and keep things tidy (albeit with the help of nannies and cleaning staff...). Even after that type of female upbringing, I have grown to be an independent woman who is happily married and happily employed as a writer and healthcare consultant.

Julie's memoir tells a story all too common but with a fresh style, humor and realism like no other of its type.

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### **Dave Bradford says**

A fun book. A good beach book. Funny. Sad. Baffling. Worth buying and reading. Recommend to certain people and not to others. Well written. Gave me the impression that there is an entire world out there that I avoided for good reason.

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### **Lisa Buie-Collard says**

As a writer considering a memoir-esque novel, I picked this up purely for that reason. I'd never heard of Julie Klam before but it looked like it might be good and I'm trying to study other authors takes on their own lives. Julie is so human, so 'girl', so there in her 'not there' way that I read through with a new awareness of what it means to put yourself out in the world, literally, not just a fictional story you wrote, but your own story. She isn't overly emotional about what she writes but you still get "it." I like that she's so close to her mother (I am too, to mine of course). As a fellow dog lover I like that she's gone on to write and do so much for them. She has inspired me to think outside my notions of risk and perhaps take a chance. This book honors the humanity in us all.

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### **Julie says**

The New York Times  
May 18, 2008  
Mommy's Dearest  
By GINIA BELLAFANTE

PLEASE EXCUSE MY DAUGHTER  
By Julie Klam.  
261 pp. Riverhead Books. \$22.95.

Let us begin by eradicating all suspicion: Julie Klam's memoir of growing up a coddled daughter of Westchester County bears no sign of narrative inauthenticity. In "Please Excuse My Daughter," there are no discernable lies masking dark hopes of literary recognition.

Klam's loving family never loses everything they own — their horses and tennis court and nine bedrooms in Katonah — only to scavenge their way back to dignity somewhere in public housing. A child of the '70s and '80s, Klam doesn't abandon herself to drugs or cults or radical South American political interests. When she writes of her jovial grandfather Saul and his card-playing at a Florida retirement community; of her game Aunt Mattie of Manhattan and Montauk; of her best friend, the diligent editor; of her father the generous insurance man and her mother the Artemis of the outlet malls, we have no cause to believe that she has deceived and dissembled to give voice to the oppressed and unheard.

So what is this cozy little affair, this tale without high highs or low lows, this memoir equivalent to a



municipal bond? Klam's book is an amiable one and yet still an account of affliction, the story of a young woman embarking on her New York adulthood plagued by the leprosy of the affluent, a paralyzing failure of ambition. Klam, in her 20s, has vague notions of becoming a writer, but the idea of doing anything seems to fill her with the fear of missing out on television, or dinner, or naps. An appreciation of free time was fostered in her rather early. The book's title refers to the habit Klam's mother, Marcia, maintained for encouraging a giddy truancy in her child. Marcia would write notes to get Julie out of school, turning her daughter's young life into one long ladies' day of lunch and consumer jubilation. On legitimate days off, during the summer, Klam received poolside instructionals in monied femininity from Marcia and her three sisters — "the Jewish Gang of Four." She writes warmly of their imparted wisdom: "Although, they explained carefully, there were face-lifts, eye-lifts, neck-lifts and boob-lifts, science had yet to discover the cure for that Great Disintegrator of marriages, the sun-damaged chest." This kind of tutelage is hardly destined to produce another Samantha Power. In Klam's case her mother's world leaves her ill equipped for achieving even a baseline of self-sufficiency.

As a culture, we flagellate ourselves for the performative demands we make of our children, and the poignancy of Klam's book — what elevates it from seeming too slight or just plain unnecessary — is its depiction of a parenting style that is radically opposite and just as perilous. There is a danger to abiding maternal devotion when it demands nothing but companionship in return. Klam graduated in the bottom 10 percent of her high school class, thanks in large part to a mother who above all sought a best friend, a woman who wore the costumes of women's liberation without ever slipping into any of its grounding ideologies. (You imagine asking her to identify "the problem with no name," and her citing bad parking at Bloomingdale's.) Though Klam has set out to do little more than tell the story of her journey toward responsibility — fiscal, marital, professional — she has written as effective a testament to the value of a working mother as any intended polemic.

Klam isn't built for polemic; she seems far too sweet. To review a memoir is always in some sense to review the life and sensibility of the person writing it, and to Julie Klam, daughter, niece, wife, mother, friend, sister, one is inclined to award a dozen stars. Throughout the book, I fantasized about calling her and saying something like: "Hey, let's get pedicures. I'll bring the SnackWells!" Though her style might derive too heavily from the women's magazine world where she came of age, she writes without bitterness or lamentation. During her dark moments, you feel sorrier for her than she ever seems to feel for herself.

It is of course the writer's curse that what girds a virtuous character too often undermines a literary effort. Klam's commitment to her mother is admirably kind-hearted and even enviable — they talk daily and for a very long time — but it keeps her from more aggressively excavating the roots of all that maternal neediness. Marcia Klam is the most interesting and complicated woman in her daughter's beloved sorority — as a girl, she gets into the academically elite Hunter High School in New York, but never goes — and in the end, she remains the biggest mystery of all.

Ginia Bellafante is a television critic at The Times.

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**L says**

Loved it!

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## **Kate says**

This book got off to a good start--a promising premise and a pretty funny voice. The author's journey towards self-awareness and greater self-reliance is frustrating, though: As much as she realizes her character flaws (which she makes clear are mostly her mother's fault, or indeed, her family's legacy), she for the most part lets herself off the hook for them. It's almost like she thinks they are cute quirks. And while she light-heartedly admits her tendency to be negative, she doesn't seem to fully grasp how grating it is. Here are some examples--

While shopping for a wedding dress with her mom & aunt, she loves the first one she tries on, but at \$7k, it is too much, (although her mom says, "maybe we can do it"). This causes her to think, "What the hell am I doing? This is turning into a terrible day." But she bucks up and settles for one that cost a mere \$2300, which earns her some praise from her family. What a sport, huh?

Immediately after the wedding, she tells her groom, "This sucks. I'm so depressed. It's over." and "It's downhill from here." (He accepts this good-naturedly.)

She spends a couple pages detailing how disappointing their three-week honeymoon to Italy was. For example, three weeks was too long; you have to pay for water in the restaurants, etc. Granted, she cops to being a difficult traveller, but still...

Speaking of travel, a previous trip--her parents took her & her husband (live-in boyfriend at that time) to a Caribbean beach cottage w/ housekeeper & cook for Hanukkah one year. But wouldn't you know? It was ruined, because two days beforehand, she found out she was pregnant, and she couldn't get in for an abortion until AFTER the vacation. Luckily, her supportive family was able to crack some jokes about the abortion. After all, "there was no way in hell I was going to be a pregnant bride. I had a very specific vision of that day, and it didn't include a Vera Wang maternity dress and bloated arms."

As she and her husband hit upon very hard times financially (both are writers, and she wasn't working on/pitching anything at that time), she, with no trace of irony, observes how out-of-touch with reality other moms around her are. She whines to her therapist that "I need to be able to go out to lunch and get my hair done and go into Barney's and buy \$500 worth of makeup." And, "I feel like jumping out a window." But, eventually, she makes a successful pitch, and that gives her the confidence to pursue more work. So now, she is bravely overcoming her life of privilege, and working to insure that her daughter will not be a princess, and will instead be self-reliant.

She basically is saying that her family (wonderful & supportive though they are) did her a disservice by making life far too easy on her. I agree. For all the navel-gazing she has done, though, I don't think she fully realizes the number this has done on her.

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## **Booker says**

Saw her read in Miami- hilarious!!!!

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## **Missy says**

I truly love memoirs, and this one was no exception. Please Excuse My Daughter by Julie Klam is a hilarious (and sometimes serious) peek into the life of 35 year old Julie Klam. She chronicles her life, growing up in

the well-to-do suburb of Bedford in Westchester County, NY. I could relate to her youth, as I grew up around the same area. A few times she had me crying, I was laughing so hard!

Julie writes with a raw honesty that I wish I could present myself. She explained situations and feelings that she had that I, myself have experienced, only I could never put it into writing.

She grew up sheltered under her parents wings, and always knew that she could count on them for help. When she falls in love with a man that is not as well off as her parents, it knocks her into a realm that is unknown to her. I felt her frustration and longing. Before meeting her current husband, she had a boyfriend who almost ruined her financially....been there, done that.

Her tales of her grandparents are sweet and funny, and the situations that she has been through vary from hilarious to insane to heart-breaking. God bless her for putting all of it down into words.

I highly recommend this memoir. I can't wait to read her next book, coming out in October...."You Had Me At Woof".....

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