



## **The Stardust Lounge: Stories from a Boy's Adolescence**

*Deborah Digges*

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## **The Stardust Lounge: Stories from a Boy's Adolescence** Deborah Digges

Stephen Digges is the kind of angry adolescent a lot of parents would have given up on. He is out of control by the time he is 13 -- running with gangs, stealing cars, fooling around with drugs and guns, and in general making his family's life hell. Confronted with his growing recklessness and defiance, his mother, the poet Deborah Digges, decides to try to accept Stephen on his own terms--a course that stuns her family and leads to the breakup of her second marriage. Digges "shadows" him on his late-night forays so that she can understand his world, welcomes his gang into their apartment, and tries to see life through his eyes. When she discovers that children who are devoted to animals have an easier time forming attachments to other people, she fills their home with a menagerie of ailing or abandoned pets. She also turns to an unconventional therapist who offers unusual — but helpful — treatment.

**The Stardust Lounge** isn't your usual story of rebellious adolescence. The power of Digges's memoir comes from her stubborn unwillingness to give up on Stephen. Even when things are roughest, Digges manages to see the intelligent, sensitive child behind the hostile behavior. However difficult the path she chooses, her story is ultimately a heartening one, and it's impossible not to root for this family as it rebuilds itself.

## **The Stardust Lounge: Stories from a Boy's Adolescence Details**

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Author : Deborah Digges

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## **From Reader Review The Stardust Lounge: Stories from a Boy's Adolescence for online ebook**

### **Geeta says**

Fragmented, lyrical account of Digges' son troubled adolescence and her efforts to hold on to their relationship. Dogs and cats play a big role in this, and I am particularly fond of Buster, the epileptic dog that Digges rescues and ultimately provides the structure her son needs.

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### **Kelly says**

"... for some children, indeed for Stephen, adolescence is simply a nightmare, a terrible, seemingly unending nightmare in which he is at risk, at one moment being chased down, in the next doing the chasing."

Digges's memoir focuses on how she handled the out of control adolescence of her youngest son, Stephen, in the early '90s. I was drawn to this book because it said that, after trying many tactics which failed, she decided to observe her son (she was inspired by Jane Goodall's book on chimps), accept him, and keep him close to her by allowing him to bring his gang member friends to their house, etc. Their real saving grace is animals, particularly an epileptic bulldog that they share responsibility for. Ultimately, I didn't feel like I got enough about what was actually happening with her son - just her thoughts about it, without those observations.

I enjoyed the story, but I skimmed parts of it as it got to be a bit too musing and meandering for me. I was much more curious about Stephen's side of things. While the book shares some photos he has taken and a few pieces of writing, I felt the absence of his voice. This book's subtitle is "Stories from a Boy's Adolescence" but it was really about a mother weathering the storm of her son's extreme adolescence.

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### **Brenda Whitner says**

#### **Stardust lounge**

Really a 3.5. This was well written. I could have done without some of the chapters but overall I liked it.

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### **Abbe says**

#### **Amazon.com Review**

"Thanks for a wonderful childhood!" Stephen Digges tells his mother as he hugs her goodbye in front of his New York City college dorm, and it's a measure of just how persuasive and potent her account of his difficult adolescence is that we know exactly what he means. At 13, Stephen was running away, stealing his mother's car, carrying guns, doing drugs, and getting into trouble with the law and in school. Already divorced from Stephen's father, Digges saw her son's problems break up her second marriage and heard society, her family,

and her neighbors tell her she was too easy on her son, that fatherless boys needed "tough love" and discipline. But Digges had the courage to listen to a highly unconventional therapist who urged her, "Join him in his anger at life.... Don't educate him about what he should have done. Let him figure it out." Together with Digges's foster son (an African American teen thrown out of his home after a stint in juvenile detention), they create a bohemian household. Three dogs (one of them epileptic) "sleep on the beds no questions asked"; Stephen does his homework with a pet mouse named Frederick in his pocket; there are swarms of kittens "leaping in and out of the windows"; and the pizza delivery for dinner may be interrupted by "phone calls from teachers, more often the cops." Go figure: creative, anti-authoritarian Stephen acquires a sense of responsibility and ambition in this offbeat atmosphere. His mother's surprisingly funny, unsentimentally tender memoir reminds us that there are no rules about raising children, just countless perils and boundless possibilities. --*Wendy Smith*

From

At 14, Stephen was stealing cars, waving guns around his house, and running with a violent gang. But his mother, poet and memoirist Deborah Digges, did not give up on Stephen. Instead, she took extraordinary steps to save him. She "shadowed" him, disguising herself and following Stephen's nighttime escapades. She invited gang members into her home, where they smoked and played loud rap music. Enduring the disapproval of neighbors and friends, the breakup of her second marriage, and many late nights, Digges refused to abandon her son. Eventually, with the help of an unconventional therapist and the family's large assortment of pets, Deborah and Stephen grew back together, sharing a level of intimacy that is sure to be the envy of her disapproving neighbors. This is not a book of advice, and Digges doesn't offer easy answers or suggest her parenting strategy to others. Instead, it is a wrenching memoir about the things that mothers and children will do to, and for, one another, written with a poet's eye for resonant images. *John Green*

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### **Becky says**

I really enjoyed this personal account of fear, frustration, and bewilderment as her 13-year-old son spirals into a life of violence and crime - and the unorthodox changes she makes in their lives to save him. As the mother of a 13-year-old boy, I thought a lot about what I would do and how I would respond if my son behaved as hers does. And I appreciated the insights from her research into what school/life can look/feel like to adolescent boys.

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### **Lanette Sweeney says**

Movingly written memoir made tragic by the author's subsequent suicide.

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### **Michelle says**

Mother's story of raising a wayward teenager and how they worked together to get him successfully through it. Uplifting, but probably not a cure-all for all parents/teens. Interesting how they were able to use their pets

as part of the healing and learning.

Book has some flow issues-ideas introduced and then a few chapters later re-visited with more detail...could tell that the chapters were written out of sequence and not checked to ensure continuity and flow.

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### **Kelly says**

this book was written by the late, great poet. She is actually my step-aunt from years ago! Such a beautiful recap of a story I knew of my family.

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### **Mary says**

I loved this memoir by the late, great poet Deborah Digges. So glad I discovered it here on Goodreads.

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### **Jan says**

Beautiful, sad, funny. For parents or people who have parents. Wonderfully written!

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### **Janet says**

Ready to read more from the author. Wonder how she went from making the best of this crazy time in her family's lives to later ending her life. RIP.

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### **Jennifer says**

I don't know what it is, but lately I seem to be in a phase of reading all about extremely disturbed/anorexic/and/or drug-addled youth. Getting a leg up on parenting teen-agers, I guess. Anyway, this book is beautifully written (the author is a poet) and her approach to dealing with her adolescent son's issues is interesting in that it is so unconventional, but I couldn't really get into it for some reason that I can't quite put my finger on.

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### **Grace says**

This is a great book. You should read it. Seriously.

Deborah Digges is a single mother of two boys. This story is about her youngest son, Stephen. When the book starts, Stephen is 13 and he's in a lot of trouble. He's associated with gangs, doing drugs, carrying weapons, skipping school, in trouble with the police, the whole nine yards. Digges is desperate not only to

turn her son around, but to regain her close relationship with him. In her desperation, she turns to whatever ideas she can grasp--Stephen is sent to live with his father, Digges tries to be more stern, military school is even considered. There are serious repercussions to Stephen's behavior and to Digges responses to it, including the ultimate break up of her second marriage.

Then, with the help of an unconventional therapist, Digges and Stephen both learn to stop trying to be the people they aren't and to embrace themselves and each other as the people they are. They move out of the city, they adopt a passel of pets, including a very high-maintenance bulldog with epilepsy. Digges serves as a foster parent to a friend of Stephen's who has been kicked out by his own parents. And Digges stops trying to get Stephen to obey rules that are only there for the sake of society and serve no real purpose. Digges focuses on what is actually fair and actually necessary. So while the teenage boys may stay up late and there may be dogs on the beds and cats coming in and out of the windows, some kind of peace is restored.

And it turns out OK. Stephen graduates from high school and goes to college. Trevor, Digges' foster son, gets his GED, gets a job, and moves into his own apartment. The animals are happy and live good lives. Digges eventually even meets another man and at the end of the book the two of them are cohabitating.

Digges writes about parenting, both the joys and the sorrows, in a way that is both realistic and enthralling. She truly loves her sons and loves being a mother to them, and she truly wants Stephen to do well not for the sake of her own pride, but for himself. She's not perfect and she never indicates that she thinks the route she takes is the only way to deal with a "difficult" child. She shows a willingness to learn right along side her son that I can't help but think is the hallmark of a great parent. The book is inspirational in that sense.

Another thing about it that is really wonderful is the importance than the Digges' animals play. Getting the first bulldog puppy, G.Q., is Digges first original and true to herself idea for how to help Stephen, and it does. The later adoption of Buster, the epileptic bulldog, with all of his many needs, cements Stephen's willingness and ability to be a responsible person. Both Digges and her son are clearly people who respond better to animals than they do to other people, and the book shows the beauty and grace in that, never even allowing for the idea that it is some kind of psychopathy.

Delinquent kids are very rarely given any kind of chance in our society. The book's characters, particularly Stephen and Trevor, are constantly butting their heads against a system that "has them pegged" and actively discourages them from succeeding in the ways in which they are able. It is a rare parent, however, who both assists her kids in bucking that system and still expects responsible and fair behavior from them. Digges never lowers her expectations of Stephen or Trevor, she just reevaluates what is really important, and it is both instructive and inspiring to watch that play out. I ended the book really feeling for the Digges family, happy to hear of both Stephen and Trevor's accomplishments, and seeing something of my own mother in Deborah, which is a very high compliment.

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### **Kristy says**

This was really interesting and scary (from a mom's point of view) on how easily your child can lose their way and how hard it is to get them back.

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## **Karima says**

A mother's story of life with a troubled teen-age son. I had a hard time with the first half of the book and considered abandoning it. Saw no hope and thus no reason to continue hearing of their grim tale. I am so glad that I did not follow this impulse.

Though many may not agree with some of the ways Digges and their therapist handled certain situations, one can't help but be moved by the ins and outs of their predicaments and how they maneuvered through them. Digges also included, along with her narrative, diary entries, letters to schools, letters to building inspectors, and an essay Stephen, her son, wrote as a high school student.

I highly recommend this book for anyone that has/has had troubles (esp. with an adolescent) and/or anyone who loves animals.

NOT meant to be a self-help OR advice book.

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