



Girlbomb: A Halfway Homeless Memoir

Janice Erlbaum

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Just two hours ago, I had been heating up some lentil soup at my mom's in Brooklyn, thinking I'd eat it and maybe read some Edith Wharton before bed. Now here I was at a runaway shelter, staring at a nun's mustache and wondering where I was going to spend the rest of my adolescence.

At fifteen, sick of her mom's spineless reactions to abusive men—and afraid of her stepfather's unpredictable behavior—Janice Erlbaum walked out of her family's apartment and never returned. What followed that fateful decision is the heart of this amazing, fascinating, and disturbing memoir.

From her first frightening night at a shelter, trying to sleep in a large room filled with yelling girls, Janice knew she was in over her head. She was beaten up, shaken down, and nearly stabbed by a pregnant girl. But it was still better than living at home. Just like that, she was halfway homeless, always one step away from being sent “upstate to Lockdown.”

As Janice slipped further into street life, she nevertheless continued to attend high school, harbor crushes, even play the lead in the spring production of *Guys and Dolls*. She also roamed the streets, clubs, bars, and parks of New York City with her two best girlfriends, on the prowl for hard drugs and boys on skateboards. Together they scored coke at Danceteria, smoked angel dust in East Village squats, commiserated over their crazy mothers, and slept with one another's boyfriends on a regular basis.

Janice Erlbaum paints a wry, mesmerizing portrait of being underprivileged, underage, and underdressed in the 1980s, bouncing from shelters to group homes, from tenement squats to legendary nightclubs. A moving and tremendously entertaining ride through the seediest parts of New York City, *Girlbomb* provides an unflinching look at street life, survival sex, female friendships, and first loves.

From the Hardcover edition.

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