

Grand Central Winter: Stories from the Street

By Lee Stringer

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Grand Central Winter: Stories from the Street By Lee Stringer

Whether Lee Stringer is describing "God's corner" as he calls 42nd Street, or his friend Suzy, a hooker and "past due tourist" whose infant child he sometimes babysits, whether he is recounting his experiences at Street News, where he began hawking the newspaper for a living wage, then wrote articles, and served for a time as muckraking senior editor, whether it is his adventures in New York's infamous Tombs jail, or performing community service, or sleeping in the tunnels below Grand Central Station by night and collecting cans by day, this is a book rich with small acts of kindness, humor and even heroism alongside the expected violence and desperation of life on the street. There is always room, Stringer writes, "amid the costume" jewel glitter...for one more diamond in the rough."
Two events rise over Grand Central Winter like sentinels: Stringer's discovery of crack cocaine and his catching the writing bug. Between these two very different yet oddly similar activities, Lee's life unwound itself, during the 1980s, and took the shape of an odyssey, an epic struggle to find meaning and happiness in arid times. He eventually beat the first addiction with help from a treatment program. The second addiction, writing, has hold of him still.
Among the many accomplishments of this book is that Stringer is able to convey something of the vitality and complexity of a down—and—out life. The reader walks away from it humming its melody, one that is more wise than despairing, less about the shame we feel when confronted with a picture of those less fortunate, and more about the joy we feel when we experience our shared humanity.

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review
Curled deep in his burrow in a Grand Central Station crawlspace, Lee Stringer--ragged, homeless, addicted to crack--is digging around for something he can use to clean his crack pipe. Finally his fingers latch around "some sort of smooth straight stick": a pencil. In the days that follow, he carries it with him wherever he goes. "So I have this pencil with me all the time and then one day I'm sitting there in my hole with nothing to smoke and nothing to do and I pull the pencil out just to look at the film of residue stuck to the sides--you do that sort of thing when you don't have any shit--and it dawns on me that it's a pencil. I mean it's got a lead in it and all, and you can write with the thing." And so that's what he does. "Pretty soon I forget all about hustling and getting a hit. I'm scribbling like a maniac; heart pumping, adrenaline rushing, hands trembling. I'm so excited I almost crap on myself. It's just like taking a hit."

Grand Central Winter is the tale of Stringer's twin addictions--writing and crack--and the lengths he went to in order to satisfy each. But Stringer dwells on neither his descent into hell nor the long journey back. Instead, he paints a nuanced portrait of street life itself, its pleasures as well as its terrors. Hustlers, hookers, dealers, and addicts come to life in a series of vignettes that are tough, unsentimental, but compassionate to the core. There's honest rage to be found in *Grand Central Winter*, but precious little political posturing. "Policy is never the real issue," he writes in "Dear Homey," his advice column for New York's homeless paper, *Street News*. "The real issue is the hearts of men."

From Publishers Weekly
"In New York City," writes the author, "there are three centers for people living on the street: Central Park, Grand Central Terminal, and Central Booking." And in this candid, sad, yet upbeat memoir we visit them all. Stringer once co-owned a graphic-design company, but with the death of his partner and his substance abuse found himself evicted from his apartment and camping in Grand Central Terminal. We see what life is like on the street and how the homeless search for shoes in a bureaucratic city agency. In one shelter we see hams, turkeys and other roasts going into the kitchen, but only fried salami is served. We witness homeless being rousted by cops for criminal trespass for sleeping in Grand Central, then learn that often the police do this only at the end of their shifts in order to collect overtime. The author relates the embarrassment of meeting an old business colleague while collecting cans for their five-cent redemption fee; how he rescued a coked-up businessman from muggers; and how the authorities ruthlessly cracked down on the homeless to move them out of Grand Central. Street News, the newspaper of the homeless, helps get him back on his feet, first by selling it, then by editing and writing for it. From stories about flim-flamming clerics prying on the homeless, to the streetwise Romeo who wants to make the prostitute mother of his child an "honest woman" ("I can't believe it, [she] even charged me to go to bed with her on our honeymoon night"), to the manipulations of being on the Geraldo show, Stringer possesses a sharp eye for the street and the rich, sagacious talent of a storyteller.
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From Library Journal
This autobiographical account of homelessness and crack addiction rambles engagingly among the key locations of New York City's Grand Central Station, Central Park, and Central Booking. Written by a former editor and columnist for Street News, a newspaper produced by New York City's homeless, the book gives full humanity to its troubled characters and homes in on the motivations, strategies, and relationships of people surviving on the streets. The power of each discrete narrative compensates for a disjointed overall structure. The biggest gap is a lack of attention to the dynamics of Stringer's transition to sobriety. In

pivoting the center of morality away from the world of "working stiffs," Stringer challenges the taken-for-granted perspective on the problems of urban poverty. Highly recommended for public and academic libraries.?Paula Dempsey, DePaul Univ. Lib., Chicago
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Users Review

From reader reviews:

Jimmy Dietz:

Do you have favorite book? In case you have, what is your favorite's book? Reserve is very important thing for us to know everything in the world. Each reserve has different aim or perhaps goal; it means that guide has different type. Some people experience enjoy to spend their time to read a book. They are really reading whatever they get because their hobby is usually reading a book. Why not the person who don't like studying a book? Sometime, particular person feel need book after they found difficult problem or even exercise. Well, probably you will want this Grand Central Winter: Stories from the Street.

Amy Zambrano:

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Debera Jessie:

Precisely why? Because this Grand Central Winter: Stories from the Street is an unordinary book that the inside of the book waiting for you to snap the idea but latter it will jolt you with the secret the idea inside. Reading this book next to it was fantastic author who else write the book in such incredible way makes the content within easier to understand, entertaining approach but still convey the meaning fully. So , it is good for you because of not hesitating having this anymore or you going to regret it. This book will give you a lot of rewards than the other book have such as help improving your proficiency and your critical thinking approach. So , still want to hold off having that book? If I were you I will go to the book store hurriedly.

Gwendolyn Mullins:

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