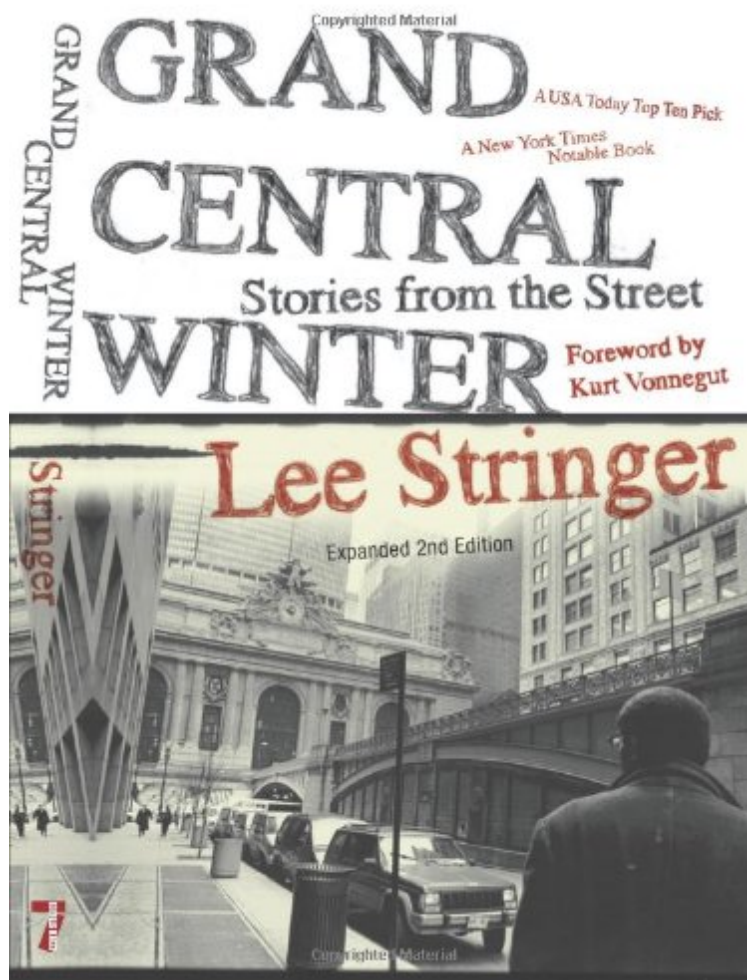


Grand Central Winter: Stories from the Street

Lee Stringer

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Lee Stringer : Grand Central Winter: Stories from the Street before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Grand Central Winter: Stories from the Street:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Insightful ReadBy MABAddiction is difficult for me to understand. Thank goodness for the help offered to the addicted. The first step is the hardest in seeking the help. I found myself gritting my teeth hoping Lee would not fall back and disappointment when he did. Everything in life, be it good or difficult, are determined by the choices we alone make. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. IntriguingBy G. J Wiener An interesting account of the world of the homeless. This bio goes to show you that a few wrong steps and you too could be out on the streets. It sure is not pretty either. Lee Stringer gives a good account of how he found himself in this unfortunate predicament. The stories sound very real if a bit disjointed. It would have been nice if Stringer detailed how he quit his drug habit and was able to find shelter in Mamaroneck. Also, his off and on residence

at the Street News does alter his perspective somewhat. However, these stories particularly the one about the reverend trying to bilk funds for his real estate business is quite captivating. Well worth a read as it goes quite fast. 3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. Lee Stringer is the Dostoevsky of the next millenium. By A Customer Three cheers for Lee Stringer. Grand Central Winter is a trenchant, yet lucid view of the underside of life. As he weaves the reader through the netherworld of crack cocaine addiction and homelessness, there are many poignant scenes of humanity and humility, juxtaposed with the brutal hardness of urban street life. After reading this tome you'll think quite differently about the next homeless person you encounter, and hopefully feel grateful that their plight hasn't become your fate.

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 downandout 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.

.com 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 roused 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. Copyright 1998 Reed Business Information, Inc. 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 Copyright 1998 Reed Business Information, Inc.