



Grand Central Winter: Stories from the Street

Lee Stringer, Kurt Vonnegut (Foreword by)

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In the underground tunnels below Grand Central Terminal, Lee Stringer -- homeless and drug-addicted over the course of eleven years -- found a pencil to run through his crack pipe. One day, he used it to write. Soon, writing became a habit that won out over drugs. And soon, Lee Stringer had created one of the most powerful urban memoirs of our time. With humane wisdom and a biting wit, Lee Stringer chronicles the unraveling of his seemingly secure existence as a marketing executive, and his odyssey of survival on the streets of New York City. Whether he is portraying "God's corner," as he calls 42nd Street, or his friend Suzi, a hooker and "past-due tourist" whose infant he sometimes baby-sits; whether he recounts taking shelter underneath Grand Central by night and collecting cans by day, or making a living hawking Street News on the subway, Lee Stringer conveys the vitality and complexity of a down-and-out life. Rich with small acts of kindness, humor, and even heroism amid violence and desperation, Grand Central Winter offers a touching portrait of our shared humanity.

Grand Central Winter: Stories from the Street Details

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From Reader Review Grand Central Winter: Stories from the Street for online ebook

Daniel Stern says

Lee Stringer lived on the streets of New York, often in the warrens underneath Grand Central Station. His description of the homeless life is as accurate in Seattle as it is in New York. He wrote for the New York street-paper Street News, and eventually became its Chief Editor. His account gives a close-up look at what this kind of paper means to many of us.

Lee Stringer makes me proud to be a writer. He managed to trade in the addiction of crack cocaine for the addiction of writing. (Not easily -- nothing in this book is easy.) I wish he was writing with my street paper, Real Change. He describes life on the streets without ever getting maudlin; he honestly reports charity scams and the violence done by homeless people themselves without ever sacrificing our empathy or our hope. It is one of the rare educations that can actually be enjoyed.

Nicole says

Stringer's account of homeless life in the NYC before homeless life was impossible here starts out as an engaging read. After a few dozen descriptions of how this bright, articulate, and clearly intelligent man CHOSE to spend his nights curled up in Grand Central Terminal for years, I got a little bored. I mean, really Lee...do you expect us to believe you just started writing and couldn't stop and it pulled you out of the streets and away from heroin? I don't buy it. I should, but I don't.

Patricia says

There's a common belief, I gather, among middle Americans that homeless folk are somehow inferior, whether in talent for living, energy, or ambition, not to mention intelligence and smartness. Lee Stringer's book quickly and with enormous pathos puts this notion to rest. Stringer, without sentiment, gives his account of living in New York City without resources OTHER than wit, intelligence, energy, and ambition. Without asking for sympathy or offering apology for who he is and what he has gone through, he portrays in plain, honest language a life that many Middle Americans might well fear would be a life they could not live up to. This is not an educational study, although it should be studied by educators, nor is it a protest, although the very fact of the conditions it portrays should raise protest. One thing that everyone should take away from Mr. Stringer's flat-footed tale is that human beings of whatever type must always be prepared to do what they must do to live--let alone survive.

Stephanie Augustin says

I didn't think I could feel for Lee Stringer as much as I had for some fictional characters. I've often stayed away from non-fiction biographical stories for this same reason: that I stop feeling as writers get too cloying, are prone to justification or simply spew facts.

And that is why Grand Central Winter hooked me: Stringer writes like a reporter, your imagination does the rest. You don't get the pityfest one would expect from homeless stories, but simply ideas of people he meets - they just all happen to live on the streets - you can easily find these types off the streets in a penthouse or on the subway (riding the train, not sleeping at stations after hours).

Stringer also provides a balanced view on mayoral and political policies regarding homeless people: how policies don't matter in the end, but the heart (in implementing these same policies) does. One example is how he learns to 'game' the homeless system, when all he wants is a pair of shoes (because he's tread the old ones to death). The people and vendors of Street News somehow stayed with me the longest after finishing this book. Maybe because they saw paper vending as an enterprise and participated readily. Or maybe because of my journalism background. Regardless, I found a certain affinity with them.

Good first work, Mr Stringer!

George K. says

?ταν ο μεγ?λος και τραν?ς Κερτ Β?νεγκατ γρ?φει πρ?λογο για το βιβλ?ο ?λλου συγγραφ?α και, αν?μεσα στα ?λλα, λ?ει ?τι ο συγγραφ?ας αυτ?ς ε?ναι ?νας "ν?ος Τζακ Λ?ντον ακριβ?ς την στιγμ? που του χρειαζ?μασταν" (τ?τε που γρ?φτηκε το βιβλ?ο τουλ?χιστον), ε, αυτ? σημα?νει πολλ? πρ?γματα, ?τσι δεν ε?ναι; Β?βαια ο Λι Στρ?νγκερ ?γραψε αυτ? το πρ?το βιβλ?ο σε μεγ?λη ηλικ?α και δεν ?χει γρ?ψει και πολλ? απ? τ?τε, ?μως ?χει κ?τι πολ? σημαντικ? και ενδιαφ?ρον να πει, και το λ?ει με ιδια?τερο και αρκετ? ξεχωριστ? τρ?πο.

Κ?θε μεγαλο?πολη ?χει και τους αστ?γους της, τους ναρκομανε?ς, τους μικροεγκληματ?ες, τους ανθρ?πους του περιθωρ?ου. Ο Λι Στρ?νγκερ ?ταν ?νας απ? αυτο?ς: Ε?χε μια δουλει? μ?χρι που τον ?διωξαν, ε?χε ατυχ?ες οικονομικ?ς φ?σεως, ?μεινε ?στεγος, εθ?στηκε στα ναρκωτικ?, ?κανε και λ?γη φυλακ?, μετ? βρ?κε μια χαμαλοδουλει? στην εφημερ?δα "Τα Ν?α του Δρ?μου", ?γινε αρχισυντ?κτης της, αγγελιαφ?ρος για τους ?στεγους και τους κατατρεγμ?νους, απ? την μια προσπαθ?ντας να βγ?λει κ?να δολ?ριο και απ? την ?λλη να αφυπν?σει τους συμπολ?τες του, να τους κ?νει να δονυ με ?λλο μ?τι τους ?στεγους και τους φτωχο?ς. Δεν ξ?ρω τι κατ?φερε, αλλ? ?κανε κ?τι. Ξ?φυγε απ? τα ναρκωτικ?, ?γινε δημοσιογρ?φος, ?γραψε ?να βιβλ?ο, μπορε? να πει κανε?ς ?τι ?ζησε και την χαμοζω? στο μ?ξιμουν. ?χει και τα θετικ? του αυτ?ς ο τρ?πος ζω?ς -απ? μια ?ποψη-, αν και φυσικ? λ?γοι τον επιλ?γουν.

Ο Στρ?νγκερ περιγρ?φει με δυναμικ? και ρεαλιστικ? τρ?πο στιγμ?ς απ? την ζω? του στους δρ?μους και τους σταθμο?ς του μετρ? της Ν?ας Υ?ρκης, σαν ?στεγος, ζητ?νος και ?πορος, στιγμ?ς απ? την χαμαλοδουλει? στην εφημερ?δα και απ? τις μ?ρες που βρ?θηκε στην φυλακ?. Μ?σω των περιγραφ?ν του γνωρ?ζουμε μια ?λλη Ν?α Υ?ρκη, βλ?πουμε μια εικ?να της που δ?σκολα θα βρει κανε?ς στους ταξιδιωτικο?ς οδηγο?ς, γνωρ?ζουμε δι?φορους αστ?γους, μικροεγκληματ?ες, νταβατ?δες και π?ρνες. Η γραφ? του Στρ?νγκερ ε?ναι, πραγματικ?, φοβερ?, ωμ? ?που χρειαζ?ταν, αλλ? και με μπ?λικη α?σθηση του χιο?μορ. ?λλος με τ?τοιο θ?μα θα μπορο?σε να γρ?ψει ?να κατ?μαρο βιβλ?ο που θα ψυχοπλ?κωνε τον αναγν?στη, ?μως ο Στρ?νγκερ ?κανε την ?λη ιστορ?α να διαβ?ζεται με απ?λαυση απ? την πρ?τη μ?χρι και την τελευτα?α σελ?δα. Ο τ?πος κατ?φερε να μεταφ?ρει αν?μεσα στους αστ?γους και τους απ?ρους και να γνωρ?σω τα προβλ?ματ? τους.

Επιγραμματικ?, πρ?κειται για ?να πολ? καλογραμμ?νο, ενδιαφ?ρον και απολαυστικ? βιβλ?ο, που ?νετα μπορε? να το κατατ?ξει κανε?ς αν?μεσα στα καλ?τερα του ε?δους αυτο?. Και τ?τοιου ε?δους βιβλ?α με συναρπ?σουν και συν?μα με προβληματ?ζουν. Εδ? ο συγγραφ?οις κ?νει και κ?ποια πολιτικ? σχ?λια, θ?γει ορισμ?να ζητ?ματα, αν και χρει?ζεται πολ? περισσ?τερος χ?ρος απ? διακ?σιες και κ?τι σελ?δες. Προσωπικ? δεν θα ε?χα πρ?βλημα αν το βιβλ?ο ε?χε το διπλ?σιο ? ακ?μα και το τριπλ?σιο μ?γεθος. Η γραφ? του Στρ?νγκερ μου φ?νηκε απ?λυτα ταιριαστ? με τα γο?στα μου. ?χει γρ?ψει και ?να ακ?μα αυτοβιογραφικ? βιβλ?ο για τα παιδικ? του χρ?νια, με τον τ?τλο "Sleepaway School", αλλ? δεν ε?ναι εξ?σου γνωστ? εκε? ?ξω, εν? ε?ναι απ?θανο να μεταφραστε? στα ελληνικ?. Τουλ?χιστον μου δ?θηκε η ευκαιρ?α να διαβ?σω αυτ? το πολ? ωρα?ο βιβλ?ο, σε εξαιρετικ? μετ?φραση.

Mary says

Can I give it more stars, please?

Brad Bell says

When I had heard about this book I was told it was a raw look at homelessness in New York and it does not disappoint. It's ugly, honest and brutal in its portrayal of drug abuse, guilt and a broken system that seeks to fix homelessness by not treating the issues these people face but by implementing temporary fixes that never take.

Lee Stringer was a drug addict, for 12 years he stumbled through the streets of New York always looking for his next opportunity to cop some money to buy drugs. He was also a articulate editor of a weekly newspaper "Street News", creates by and sold by the homeless population of New York. The book, written by Stringer, doesn't sugarcoat the realities of life on the street. From tales of sleeping under the terminal at Grand Central Station to fellow crack addicts ripping him off to quench their own habits, he doesn't paint the men and women on the street as misunderstood stand up citizens but people who are struggling.

I'm guilty of it as we all are of looking through homelessness in the hopes of we ignore it we don't have to deal with the reality of it, these are people who through one way or another are trapped in job prospects, or addiction and the help doesn't exist for them. We tend to dehumanize them which is something Stringer talks about in the book and the devastating effect that has on a persons psyche, there can be no improvement without understanding and this book is a revelation of showing the unfiltered truth behind that statement.

Yersinia Pestis says

Grand Central Winter (1998)

Interessante fino a che non ha sentito l'esigenza di diventare edificante; non racconta la cosa più importante, cioè come ha fatto a smettere

Mélanie says

Presque un coup de cœur, j'ai vraiment adoré cette lecture!

Christine says

I wanted to give this 4 stars but I only gave it 3 because of the disjointed feel at the end and the lack of any satisfying conclusion. I grew to feel compassion for the author and hope for better things for him. He tells of his life on the streets addicted to crack trying to keep his humanity and even support himself (and unfortunately his drug habit) by collecting cans and selling newspapers. He ends up becoming the senior editor of the newspaper but it would be more time before he became clean and sober.

The last few chapters were his musings on our perception of homelessness, policies, the human condition and so on. He alluded to his recovery and breaking the cycle of addiction and his search for God but it was only mentioned in passing as he recounted one of his more shameful nights on the street. I would've like to know what finally made him want to turn his life around and what exactly helped him in his recovery. I felt that this would've been something that truly could've helped others that maybe are where he once was. He demonstrated throughout his book that much of homelessness has more to do with addictions like drugs, mental illness, and people that are trapped by circumstance than just needing a place to live. In my opinion an account of how he recovered and pushed beyond this cycle of self-destruction would've helped me as a reader feel that there was something positive that came from his suffering and feel hope that others can change as well.

George Mavronisiotis says

Φοβερ? βιβλ?ο για τις διακοπ?ς σας και τις δυνατ?τητες που κρ?βεται μ?σα σας - προς θεο? καμ?α σχ?ση με τα συνηθισμ?να σκουπ?δια αυτοβο?θειας που πλασ?ρονται σαν βιβλ?α στα σουπερμ?ρκετ – απ? τον Λι Στρ?γκερ.

Ζο?σε σε μια αυτοσχ?δια τρ?πα στο Γκραντ Σ?ντραλ -τον σταθμ? των τρα?νων στην 42η Λεωφ?ρο της Ν?ας Υ?ρκης στο κεντρικ? Μανχ?ταν - οχυρωμ?νη με χαρτ?νι και εφημερ?δες και ?των ?νας βετερ?νος του κρακ και εκτ?ς απ? την π?πα του κουβάλο?σε π?ντα ?να μολ?βι καθ?ς χρειαζ?των κ?τι σκληρ? για να καθαρ?ζει τα υπολε?μματα τις π?πας για την τελευτα?α αγωνι?δη ρουφηξ?;. Το μολ?βι ?κανε θαυμ?σια αυτ? τη δουλει?;. ?ρθε ?να κρ?ο βρ?δυ ?μως που δεν ε?χε καθ?λου κρακ ο?τε καν υπολε?μματα στην π?πα του για να καθαρ?σει. Ο χρ?νος κυλο?σε αργ? και οδυνηρ?;. Στη δι?θεσ? του ε?χε μ?νο μια ?χρηστη π?πα, ?να μολ?βι και μπ?λικο χαρτ? που τον κρατο?σε ζεστ?;. Ο Λι τ?τε για πρ?τη φορ?, ?τσι για αντιπερισπασμ?, ?ρχισε να χρησιμοποιε? το μολ?βι και το χαρτ? σ?μφωνα με το σκοπ? για τον οπο?ον ε?χαν εξαρχ?ς δημιουργηθε?;. Σχεδ?ν αμ?σως συν?βη κ?τι εκπληκτικ?, κ?τι σαν φτι?ξιμο, οι ?ρες περνο?σαν ευχ?ριστα, ηδονιστικ? και ο Λι συν?χιζε να γρ?φει σε φρεν?ρης ρυθμο?ς και ?σο περισσ?τερο ?γραφε τ?σο καλ?τερος γιν?ταν, ?τσι μερικο?ς μ?νες αργ?τερα απ?κτησε μια μ?νιμη στ?λη στην street news και ?κτοτε υπ?ρχαν τ?σσερα πρ?γματα που ?κανε κ?θε μ?ρα: κ?λπα για να βγ?λει φρ?γκα, η εξασφ?λιση της δ?σης του, το ?να μμα τη π?πας και το γρ?ψιμο, στο ?ποιο ?γινε τ?σο καλ?ς που στο τ?λος ?μεινε μ?νο του.

Jennifer says

This is another book from my to-read shelf, a book I've owned for years and years but never read. Until last night, home from an unusually busy and tiring day of work, having recently spent a lot of time thinking about homelessness, especially being homeless in Michigan in the winter, this book jumped out at me.

I read the entire book in a single evening.

This isn't the kind of book that is going to give a lot of Answers. It doesn't explain why people are homeless or what being homeless is like, but it does tell the story of one man who was homeless and addicted to crack for a long stretch in the eighties and early nineties. He is processed through shelters, arrested several times for vagrancy and other minor offenses, is sentenced to community service, sleeps in subway ramps, witnesses crimes and commits a few (mostly trespassing, vagrancy, drug possession.) He also writes, becomes the senior editor for *Street News*, intervenes in a mugging, appears on *Geraldo*, and survives years of homelessness with wit and dignity intact.

Stringer is a good writer. There are shades here of Vonnegut (one of his earliest, most vocal supporters), London, Bukowski. But in the end his voice is all his own. He succeeds in humanizing homelessness, and also in showing us that most of the ways we respond to homelessness, both as a society and individually, are pretty crap. Shelters that scam various systems, teaching the homelessness to become scammers themselves, laws that penalize the powerless on behalf of the powerful, and the misguided, self-involved, and sometimes downright mean ways people behave.

This is a book to expand your horizons.

Alan says

autobiographical account of a homeless man's various troubles. Written in the pencil he finds to clean out his crack pipe.

C.M. Spivey says

I'm so glad to have found and read this book. Thoughtful and eloquent. Highly recommended.

TK421 says

I would have never read GRAND CENTRAL WINTER had I not heard Kurt Vonnegut speak about it on CSPAN Book-TV a few years ago. My initial reaction was: another memoir about subject X. But as I went about doing things in the house, keeping an ear on what Vonnegut had to say about this book, I soon realized I had stopped doing my chores, and was now fixated on the life of Lee Stringer, the author and man that chronicled his life on the streets in NYC. Mind you, this was the NYC before "a cop on every corner" was

implemented. Stringer spoke about his life with humility. When asked why he wrote this book, Stringer said: I finally put down the pipe. (He had just found a broken pencil in the hovel he was occupying under Grand Central Station and used a piece of discarded paper to record a few thoughts he had.) From this one moment of clarity, Stringer chronicled an unforgettable tale of loss and woe, redemption and struggle, and slowly began to turn his life around. And Stringer holds nothing back—this story is populated with “unsavory” people: pimps and prostitutes, drug dealers and other homeless people that have either gone mad or are on the brink of succumbing to their madness; but he gives not only a voice to these people, he gives them life. Their stories explore what it means to be alive in a city that looks at them as if they were ghosts. Parts of his story are bleak; parts are laugh-out-loud funny. Every part is meaningful. This was a powerful story, and one worth telling.

HIGHLY RECOMMENDED
