



Streetlife

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Editorial Choice:

off

Media type:

Book

BfK Rating:

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The remarkable thing about this collection is that there's no moaning in it. Twenty pieces of writing by homeless young women and not a trace of self pity or even of anger. Instead the reader is continually surprised by the optimism, determination and pride displayed by contributors in the teeth of odds which would surely reduce most of us to gibbering husks.

Nineteen year old Kay won't even admit she's homeless. 'I've got a really nice home,' she says, 'and I'm proud of it. Home for Kay is an old lorry she and her boyfriend bought and fixed up, putting in cupboards, bookshelves and a wardrobe. There's a sink with a water butt underneath, a wood burning stove. even an old bath someone had used to mix concrete in. The couple have taught themselves maintenance from the lorry's manual, and Kay is trying to get onto a welding course 'so I can fix our lorry myself and make a living out of repairing others.'

Another contributor relates how from the age of fourteen she was obliged to work twelve hours a day in her family's business and take GCSE courses in the evenings. Too fatigued to concentrate on her studies, she got poor results and was beaten by her father. Later he raped her, and when she told her mother she wasn't believed. The sexual abuse continued till at nineteen, on the brink of suicide, she fled her home. Now housed temporarily in a London hostel, she says '.. but it hasn't stopped me getting on with my life?.'

While I was reading this book I watched a TV documentary about a handful of Lloyd's 'names' who had put up money to make money and had lost it instead. The possibility of loss had of course been part of the deal but they refused to accept this, whining and moaning and demanding that the Government (i.e. you and I) compensate them for their failed gamble. They should read this book. It would acquaint them with loss, and show them how at least twenty persons with none of their advantages are handling it.

To read **Streetlife** is to become educated in a subject whose truths have for too long been distorted or obscured by malice, myth and misinformation. I only wish I had had a copy beside me when I was writing **Stone Cold** .

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