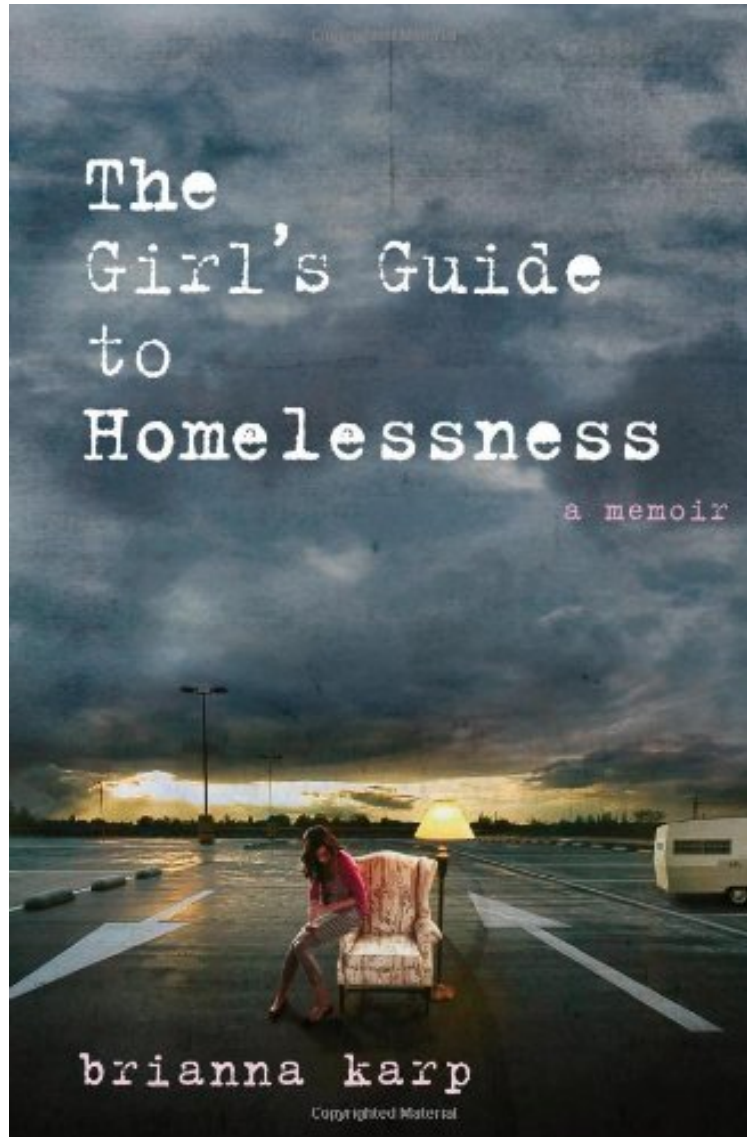


[Read free] The Girl's Guide to Homelessness: A Memoir

The Girl's Guide to Homelessness: A Memoir

Brianna Karp

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Brianna Karp : The Girl's Guide to Homelessness: A Memoir before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Girl's Guide to Homelessness: A Memoir:

8 of 8 people found the following review helpful. Very Frustrating ReadBy CustomerI stumbled across the author's story on Yahoo and went into buying this book (kindle edition) in an effort to be supportive. Looking back, I should have looked for the book at a used book store and saved my money. I have read some of the reviews and have to agree with the one and two star reviewers. This book does not support the title or the theme the author is going for. I am sure

most people attempt to compare the author's situation with someone they know, my parents actually do live in their RV by choice and are fine with it, but circumstances are different for each person. I do not believe that the author was "homeless," per say, but about the same as most individuals who had lost their job and still continue to, facing uncertainty. Putting all of that aside, if this book were perceived as a fictional story then the ratings might have gone up slightly. The main character/author comes across through her writing as being frank with her actions, as well as not seeming concerned with her constant bad decisions throughout the last couple of years. I would feel the same about anyone making these same choices but the fact that the reader can put a living, breathing person to the actions of the character makes it all the more aggravating. There are very few people I have come across in my life thus far that have shocked and annoyed me regarding their choices but the author of this book blows me away- she wrote a book about it! Her every attempt at justification is void when looked at from a readers perspective and the fact that the author will say something regarding her knowledge of what she is doing looks this way or that but homeless people are allowed their vices. This is true but those should not include buying international airline tickets, let alone for someone you don't even know. All in all, I couldn't stop reading because I kept hoping the end of the book would offer inspiration but it does no such thing. The author chalks all of her failures up to circumstances of life instead of poor personal choices or simply taking responsibility for her own life. I hope Miss Karp learns from this book and her previous experiences and takes the time to read these reviews and the response from readers and makes better choices for herself, as well as increases her self worth.

7 of 7 people found the following review helpful. More Like "The Girl's Guide to Failed Internet Romance" By ContraryMary I bought this book because I expected a historical artifact that provides social commentary on the rapidly shrinking American middle class. Instead, I received an explicit tell-all, chock full of gratuitous accounts--replete with prurient details--of childhood sexual and physical abuse, date rape, and early adult sexual experimentation the author later regretted. If I'd wanted that, I would have watched Jerry Springer reruns on youtube. Add to that the author's ponderous rehashing of a turbulent long distance, international relationship which began online and (predictably) failed, and the book's title is a bit of a bait and switch. While cathartic for the author, there's not much in her book that has anything remotely to do with how one becomes homeless, deals with being homeless, and successfully transitions back to being housed and financially secure. Apparently the author expects readers to sift through the archives of her blog for that. To be fair, several aspects of the author's account of falling into homelessness and trying to get out again do ring true. I had to look hard to find them, though.

- *Lack of knowledge of how to successfully navigate institutions of higher learning and the white collar work force after having been reared in an abusive environment. Check.
- *Continuing to be exploited in adulthood by the same family members who abused one in childhood. Check.
- *Inability to recognize and accept that one must immediately scale down one's lifestyle and spending habits, rather than keep up appearances at the insistence or for the sake of one's friends, relatives and acquaintances. Check.
- *Finding oneself in circumstances which require one to share habitation with relatives/friends/acquaintances who demand favors and find ways to scam one in exchange for the food and shelter they're providing "out of the kindness of their hearts," thus keeping one in perpetual bondage in exchange for a place to sleep, shower, use the toilet and store one's clothes food. Check.
- *Falling victim to predatory financial products, such as refund anticipation loans, because one believes one has no other alternative. Check.
- *Rather than using windfalls such as an inheritance, tax refund, or retroactive benefits checks to help one advance, one uses those funds to repay unsecured personal loans, buy gifts, travel or for other "splurges." Check.

Bottom line: Although I found some merit in the book, I'm embarrassed to have recommended it to colleagues and professional acquaintances prior to reading it.

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Don't let the title fool you (some spoilers) By JR Watson This book was chosen for our book club to read and I must say right off the bat I didn't like it. As the book continued, I actually thought I'd prefer having all my teeth pulled out of my mouth without being numbed then rammed back in would be more ideal than continuing to read and finish this book. However being the book purist that I am, I begrudgingly finished it. If you're bound and determined to read this book then borrow it from the library or someone you know who has it. I'm sorry to say this as I'm sure proceeds from this book go to help Ms. Karp. I have nothing against Ms. Karp or her experience. To me the book felt overly melodramatic. It didn't grab my heartstrings the way Dave Pelzer's books did. Unlike her title, it's not a guide to homelessness. If I were to be homeless in three days, I wouldn't pick this book up to help me survive the pitfalls. After reading this book, I was actually compelled to read Dave Pelzer's books because I felt I had lost my heart, because I just didn't connect with Brianna and her story. However, my heart's still there. I feel that perhaps this story could've had more potential had Ms. Karp had a different editor and/or waited a few more years to write this story. I feel like it was way too soon to have written a memoir. I have followed up on Ms. Karp's blog and pleased to see that not only have things got better for her, that she's in an apartment, got a job, but the most impressive to me is that after her last relationship took a 2 year hiatus from relationships to focus on herself. She's grown and matured as woman and is highly involved in community service and continuing her efforts to help put a spotlight on homelessness. Now would've been the optimum time to write a memoir about her experience, I think it would have a different feeling now, than what it currently has. I'm sorry Ms. Karp and other supporters of this book, but that's just the way I see it. However I wish Ms. Karp all the best and hope she continues to grow and heal from her past. All the best. :D

Brianna Karp entered the workforce at age ten, supporting her mother and sister throughout her teen years in Southern California. Although her young life was scarred by violence and abuse, Karp stayed focused on her dream of a steady job and a home of her own. By age twenty-two her dream became reality. Karp loved her job as an executive assistant and signed the lease on a tiny cottage near the beach. And then the Great Recession hit. Karp, like millions of others, lost her job. In the six months between the day she was laid off and the day she was forced out onto the street, Karp scrambled for temp work and filed hundreds of job applications, only to find all doors closed. When she inherited a thirty-foot travel trailer after her father's suicide, Karp parked it in a Walmart parking lot and began to blog about her search for work and a way back.

About the Author **BRIANNA KARP** is a passionate advocate and spokesperson for the homeless. She lives in Riverside, California. Visit her at TheGirlsGuidetoHomelessness.com. Excerpt. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved. I'm trying to decide whether it's fair or not to say that insanity runs in my blood. Certainly it's a statement with which many of my family members would, shall we say, take umbrage. But I don't know that it's much of a stretch, from an outsider's perspective. I'm not talking about the kooky, madcap, adorably dysfunctional brand of crazy, either. The Moonstruck-style family with their over-the-top yelling and gesticulating, followed by reconciliations and hugs and kisses and banquet-reunion meals. The bighearted kind of crazy. That's not my family. My lineage runs more along the batshit-fucking-nuts crazy train. As you might imagine, this is enough to give a girl a massive mind trip. There's always that underlying paranoia wondering whether I have miraculously broken the mold and escaped the curse, or whether the insanity is buried and brewing just below the surface, lying dormant and awaiting the inevitable breakout.***I was born a fourth-generation Jehovah's Witness. There wasn't much choice in the matter. On my mother's side, the JW heritage goes all the way back to my great-grandparents Polish immigrants to Canada who met on a bus one day in the early 1900s, discovered they each thought the other looked pretty spicy and married a week later. Mary and TaTa Mazur would later convert to the "Bible Students," renamed "Jehovah's Witnesses" in 1931, and pump out nine devout Jehovah's Witness children up through the Great Depression, one of whom was my grandmother, Iris, the youngest and the black sheep and hell-raiser of the family. The Mazur clan would later tell stories of their persecution as Jehovah's Witnesses during both world wars, including the ban on the religion in Canada from 1940 to 1943, when members organized an underground resistance. My grandmother would affectionately relate stories of her father's imprisonment when he was caught distributing JW pamphlets, only to find himself the first known believer to be thrown out of jail for singing religious hymns in Polish at the top of his lungs (and horrendously out of tune), distressing prison guards and inmates alike. I know, I know, it all sounds very charming and "warms-the-cockles-of-your-heart" so far, doesn't it? Believe me, there are plenty more stories where those came from. JWs thrive on the martyr complex, since they believe that the Bible prophesied that members of the One True Religion would be greatly persecuted. Therefore, I've heard every variation of the chuckle-worthy tale in which oppressed Jehovah's Witnesses pull one over on their tormentors. But. My great-grandparents also claimed to be "of the anointed." In JW-speak, this means that they believed Jehovah God had spoken to them and revealed that they were among the elite 144,000 chosen ones, selected to go to heaven and reign alongside Him as kings once He brought about a prophesied New Order of Things. This new order, Jehovah's Witnesses believe, involves the brutal destruction of every nonbeliever at a bloody, apocalyptic Armageddon showdown, and the subsequent building of a Paradise Earth populated solely by you guessed it the rest of the Jehovah's Witnesses, the ones not chosen to reign as kings in heaven. They don't tell you this stuff on your doorstep, do they? So. Two ancestors hearing voices and with delusions of kingly grandeur. Check. My grandmother, Iris, despite a few young years of running wild, raising Cain and living something of a double life few Witnesses would have approved of, remains in the religion to this day. She attends a Kingdom Hall (JWs don't call them churches; they consider churches "pagan" and "of false religion") in California, where she moved and settled down with my grandfather, Jeremiah. They are now divorced, but he is also a Jehovah's Witness and lives a relatively sweet, unassuming life under the radar in Alabama with his second wife. Iris Wallingford, nee Mazur, carried on the precedent of crazy and inflated it to (apologies in advance for the pun) epic biblical proportions. According to family lore, she abused her three daughters physically, mentally and emotionally. Legendary tales of her heaving vacuum cleaners through the air at their heads, dragging them along the hallway by their hair until it came out by the roots in clumps or grinding pencil lead deep into their knees as they squirmed and fidgeted during two-hour Kingdom Hall meeting sessions were a staple of my childhood. This is all, of course, merely what I've gleaned from multiple sources' whispered tales, including those of family members and friends but do I believe there's at least some truth to it? Yep. All three girls were destined to run away from home at a young age. First Louisa, the eldest, split for Hawaii, followed by my mother, Linda, at age sixteen. Mom dropped out of high school, took her GED exam and lived on Oahu with Louisa (who had spiraled into drug use) for a year or so before returning to California. Charisse, the youngest, possibly had it the worst she was afflicted with a severe, lifelong form of alopecia, which caused her to lose her hair and endure torment at school as well as at home. Upon leaving home, she searched for solace in the arms of men, hopping from one to another and sinking two marriages with kind, loving (and non-JW) husbands due to compulsive infidelity. As of this writing, she is imprisoned in Illinois for a period of twelve years, convicted of

vehicular manslaughter committed while driving under the influence for the third time. I have not seen her in ages, but, according to family members, she has also had problems with illegal drugs for years and has been "disfellowshipped," or excommunicated, from the Jehovah's Witnesses at least twice. Her two young children are cared for by her non-JW ex-husband, so I hold out hope that they may yet have a quasi-normal life, despite everything. My grandmother, meanwhile, spends most of her time in a rocking chair in front of the TV at home. Once a slim, lovely young woman with mischievous eyes who attracted men like flies to honey, she has ballooned to ghastly proportions and relies on a walker to get from place to place. Her house is in a condemnable, Grey Gardens statedecades of hoarded trash and junk piled from floor to ceiling, with the exception of walking paths hewn out from room to room. I'm pretty sure I've seen McDonald's containers in there dating back to the 1960s. You think I'm kidding? In Iris Wallingford's warped mind, every bit of junk is a treasure or a memory to add to the magpie's nest. In the past, I have attempted to spend time with my grandma, but could only ever handle her in small doses, as her grating chief hobby is living in the past, reliving imaginary grudges and slights dating back some seventy-odd years. Many of these are against her own brothers and sisters, all but one already passed on respect for the dead means nothing to her. She and my mother hate each other with a passion. Although they attend the same congregation, they don't speak, but always have an arsenal of nasty digs on hand ready to fling at the other. Despite Iris's extraordinary disregard for her own health, which would seem to invite the most massive heart attack in the history of heart attacks, my mother jokes grimly that Iris will outlive us all out of spite. I tell these stories because I think it's important for me to establish up front, before I go into my own saga, that I believe I understand, or at least try to understand, why my mother is the way she is. For much of her life, she was indeed victimized pair cult indoctrination from birth with unabated abuse by a bitter, raving 350-pound maniac, and you've got a recipe for disaster. To this day, I don't know exactly how much of my mother's own particular instability is a product of nature or nurture, but I've got my suspicions that one didn't exactly help the other. Having returned from her less-than-successful jaunt to Hawaii, which left her broke and disillusioned for such a young kid, my mother endured a brief period of abuse again at home with Iris. At eighteen, by Jehovah's Witness standards she was actually an old maid, though she was young, lovely and vivacious popular at school, something of a class clown in compensation for the dark home life of which she was so ashamed. She finally escaped (or so she thought) by marrying the first man she could at nineteen, and getting pregnant with me right away. Bob Neville. Bob was not short for Robert. Just plain Bob. He was a gawky, scarecrow-esque kid a year older than my mother, most often said to resemble Peter Pan. He definitely didn't look like a monster. Mom met him at the moped repair shop after an unfortunate accident in which a neighbor backing out of his driveway neglected to notice her coming up the street and ran over her scooter. She would later point out to me the hedge that had obscured the driver's vision: "If it weren't for that hedge, you would never have been born!" She would come to regret that damn hedge. Jehovah's Witnesses don't date non-Jehovah's Witnesses, and they definitely aren't supposed to marry them. They view it as marrying a walking corpse what's the point of falling in love with someone the great and powerful Jehovah is just going to roast with a flaming meteorite at Armageddon, anyway? Members can be privately counseled, publicly reprimanded, disciplined or even disfellowshipped and shunned for pursuing a relationship with a nonbeliever. Ergo, Bob accepted a "Bible study" with my mother, toward the goal of conversion, and they married quickly and furtively. I was born March 6, 1985. Bob turned out to be the classic wife beater, belying his sweetly youthful appearance. My mother claims that a week after their wedding, he woke her up in the middle of the night, accused her of cheating on him, bundled her into the car and drove her out to the desert in silence, pausing to open the door and shove her out into the sand, dumping her in only a T-shirt and no underwear. Then he drove home and went back to sleep while she walked until her feet were bloody, finally hitching a ride home from a concerned passing motorist and his wife around dawn. Other stories centered around the time Bob put my mother through a wall in their house, leaving a perfect Linda-shaped indent, and when he picked up a set of heavy stone coasters from the coffee table and started bashing his own forehead in during an argument until blood spurted and coated the furniture, all the while screaming at her as though bestowing an unavoidable curse. "Look how much I love you! I'll even hurt myself for you! Look what you're making me do to myself! Look what you're making me do to you!" I hurt you because I love you. Of course. It was a constant refrain of his, definitely not the most original line ever thought up by an abusive husband. Interestingly, it would turn out to be a recurring theme in my own life as well, that persistent, lingering stench you just can't get rid of no matter how hard you scrub. My mother became pregnant again with my little sister, Molly, mere months after my birth. My sister was born on May 7, 1986 with a congenital defect requiring open-heart surgery, which set the local congregation elders in a tizzy. At that time, only a handful of infants had ever received bloodless heart surgery, and Jehovah's Witnesses apply the archaic biblical command to "abstain from blood" (Acts 15:29) to the ultimate possible literal interpretation blood pudding isn't the only no-no! The command was previously misapplied to organ transplants, considered cannibalism, for many years. However, "new light" from Jehovah eventually revealed to the old men in the head honcho seat in Brooklyn, the Governing Body of Jehovah's Witnesses, that oops! organ transplants (and later blood fractions, though not whole blood itself) were OK after all. Sorry about all those faithful Witnesses who died (or allowed their children to die) under the "old light," folks. Move along, nothing to see here. At the time of my sister's birth, however, even the use of medical treatments utilizing blood fractions, such as plasma, albumin,

immunoglobulins and the like, were not an option for members (they didn't become a "conscience matter" for Jehovah's Witnesses until 1989, when Molly was three years old), and my mom, barely more than a kid herself, was beset upon by elders waving power of attorney forms in her face. Molly's primary hospital insisted that she required a blood transfusion, and that they were prepared to go to court to seek and enforce an injunction making sure she received it. The circus reached its peak when my mother snatched my little sister from the local hospital and took her to Texas, where Dr. Denton Cooley, the world's foremost "blood-free surgeon" (and at the time, one of only two in the United States who performed such procedures on children), completed the two operations that would save Molly's life and leave her with her two scars: a thick, ropey one all the way down from sternum to belly button, and a thin crescent-shaped one under her left breast, toward her armpit. Though only a year old at the time, I distinctly recall the sight of my frail, emaciated sister in a hospital crib, wailing, covered in tubes and surrounded by stuffed animals my mother purchased for her. Her crib and hospital apparatus were all covered in large stickers bearing the words "Jehovah's Witness No Blood!" Molly's recovery and success story were heralded by Jehovah's Witnesses everywhere as a triumph of Jehovah over Satan, and proof that their religion's ways were the best after all. Though Mom attempted to escape her abusive marriage, however, the congregation elders were having none of it. Despite the angry bruises and welts covering her from head to toe, and an "unpleasant incident" in which Bob leaped up on the hood of our van in the parking lot of the Kingdom Hall (in front of dozens of witnesses) as my mother attempted to flee and I screamed in confused terror in the backseat, they advised her to "wait on Jehovah, be a better wife and perhaps things would get better." Divorce is scripturally prohibited for Jehovah's Witnesses, except in the case of adultery. Even abused spouses are advised to remain in their dead-end marriages and "set a good example" for their abuser, "that he might be won over without a word." (Read: Maybe if you're really, really nice to him, he'll realize what a jackass he's been, feel sorry and repent. Even if it takes a decade or three.) And, they said, if he did kill her, as he threatened and she feared, she would be resurrected to Paradise. God would fix everything eventually. Just not right now.