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Goodbye To All That: Writers On Loving And Leaving New York



Synopsis

Winner of a Foreword IndieFab Book of the Year Award
In 1967, Joan Didion wrote an essay called *Goodbye to All That*, a work of such candid and penetrating prose that it soon became the gold standard for personal essays. Like no other story before it, Didion's tale of loving and leaving New York captured the mesmerizing allure Manhattan has always had for writers, poets, and wandering spirits. In this captivating collection, 28 writers take up Didion's literary legacy by sharing their own New York stories. Their essays often begin as love stories do, with the passion of something newly discovered; the crush of subway crowds, the streets filled with manic energy, and the certainty that this is the only place on Earth where one can become exactly who she is meant to be. They also share the grief that comes when the metropolis loses its magic and the pressures of New York's frenetic life wear thin on even the most fervent dwellers. As friends move away, rents soar, and love still remains just out of reach, each writer's goodbye to New York is singular and universal, like New York itself. With Cheryl Strayed, Dani Shapiro, Emma Straub, Ann Hood, and more.

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Customer Reviews

This is a surprisingly dull collection. As mentioned elsewhere, there is a sameness to the essays, a disappointing homogeneity in the selection of writers (all of them women of about the same age, who tried to be writers, and sort of made it and sort of didn't, who moved, many of them, upstate). Rarely does a writer here manage to capture the genuine essence, the harshest truth, of what it means -- what it FEELS like -- to struggle and compete in New York against a constant, oncoming

tide, and then fail at it. It can be a bulldozing experience, mixed with the most heightened elation when it's working. Nothing feels like succeeding in New York, nothing feels as crushing as the illusion when it drops away. But no one captured that truth in this book. (EDIT: Except, I should mention, Rebecca Wolff -- whose anger at the betrayal of the city's promises, and its shoddy evolution, feels palpable. And she was born there!) It takes a certain hubris to use "Goodbye To All That" as a title and then not even include Joan Didion's brilliant essay, which makes the others here read like something out of Elle or Marie Claire. Far too soft, too much about the financial cost of New York (there are so many other reasons why a life there can be defeated, and all of them more interesting than money). Kind of bummed that this wasn't better.

As a former New Yorker who left for the sunnier skies of LA eight years ago, I thoroughly related to and loved this book. I savored each essay, reading only a few each night, so that I could enjoy the book longer. What's funny is that when I left, I thought I was the only one who'd experienced the weird combination of exhilaration and freedom with nostalgia and doubt. Little did I know how many others not only felt the same, but could articulate it a heck of a lot better.

I found the stories in Good Bye to All of That touching and well written. The whole book is crisply edited and a joy to read. The personal nature of these short stories is very compelling making it hard to put the book down. Thank you, Sari Botton and your team of writers for such a good read.

Thank you, Sari Botton, for compiling these wonderful and compelling essays. I really enjoyed the varied writing styles and perspectives. The common threads echoed many of the reasons that I chose to leave NYC almost 20 years ago as my father reminded me that "Everything begins and ends in New York. Why leave??" Each passage also elicited memories of my high school years, trekking into the city via the LIRR to hit the clubs, thinking that my big-haired, rhinestone-belted bridge and tunnel posse blended in with the trannies and club kids so much older and more city savvy than us. But, most of all, I enjoyed the deeply honest and candid coming-of-age stories about goals and dreams that come face to face with reality. I admire all of these women for going for it.

Two years ago, when I was facing leaving New York City to go live full-time with my husband across the Hudson River, I tried to find a book just like this to help me with that difficult decision. I really wondered: What would life be AFTER New York? Now, thanks to Sari Botton, there are 28 wonderful essays written by a talented group of writers on just this subject. Here are perspectives of

people who were born there, and those who moved there looking for some dream. Some left and eventually returned, others were happy in their new lives elsewhere. All were incredibly illuminating. I highly recommend this book for anyone who ever loved (or hated) New York, anyone thinking of moving there. You'll end up feeling like you've made 28 new friends.

This book was fascinating to me because I have never ceased to marvel at the palpable energy of New York City. It has never failed to take my breath away - literally. But after spending a week there on one occasion I couldn't help but wonder how 'real' people actually lived there. Well, as it turns out some do and some don't. Some leave and come back, some leave never to return. There are so many similarities in these essays: loners, drugs, seedy neighborhoods, and a place to be different. As Sari Botton says "I loved the feeling of being alone but among people." (Pg.154). This appears as a recurring motivation in many of the narratives. After 8 or 10 essays it became repetitious and a little boring. I gave up after #19. I find that the stories are not so much about New York City as they are about the people, in this case, women writers all. These are snippets of different female perceptions of a particular place. Their personalities and sensibilities are what make it possible or impossible for them to cope (or not cope) with New York City. This is not so much a comment on New York City as it is about the person. New York City is New York City. It is the person and their personal experiences that make the difference. A little diversity may have made the theme more interesting.

Loved reading this book~ Especially since I love and left New York :) The editor of the book did an exceptional job.

In the individual stories there is much good writing. however, aggregated in this volume the stories begin to sound repetitive - young women who move to (or back to) NY to pursue creative writing, find the financial cost too high, and then move elsewhere. Mostly during the same 10 year period. I would have preferred more varied perspectives on the titular theme.

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