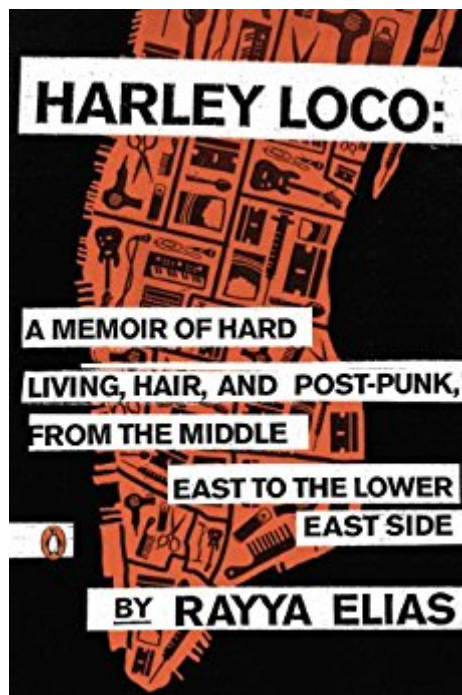


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Harley Loco: A Memoir Of Hard Living, Hair, And Post-Punk, From The Middle East To The Lower East Side



Synopsis

“Terrific. . . Rayya’s stories blew mine away.” — Elizabeth Gilbert “A classic, blood-stained love letter to bohemian NYC.” — Craig Marks When she was seven, Rayya Elias and her family fled the political conflict in their native Syria, settling in Detroit. Bullied in school and caught between the world of her traditional family and her tough American classmates, she rebelled early. Elias moved to New York City to become a musician and kept herself afloat with an uncommon talent for cutting hair. At the height of the punk movement, life on the Lower East Side was full of adventure, creative inspiration, and temptation. Eventually, Elias’s passionate affairs with lovers of both sexes went awry, her (more than) occasional drug use turned to addiction, and she found herself living on the streets “between her visits to jail. This debut memoir charts four decades of a life lived in the moment, a path from harrowing loss and darkness to a place of peace and redemption. Elias’s wit and lack of self-pity in the face of her extreme highs and lows make *Harley Loco* a powerful read that’s sure to appeal to fans of Patti Smith, Augusten Burroughs, and Eleanor Henderson. From the Hardcover edition.

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Customer Reviews

Harley Loco: A Memoir of Hard Living, Hair, and Post-Punk, from the Middle East to the Lower East Side

Rayya Elias has given the world her life on a silver platter. She is incredibly candid about her sexuality and her struggle with addiction. The book is a hard-hitting, no holds barred, unapologetic memoir that's not for the faint hearted. Being a memoir the book is obviously spoken in the narrative. What's incredible about the read is that Rayya's life plays out like a movie. You will have a hard time believing the woman actually lived each of the experiences; that the book is pure exaggeration or fiction but you would be wrong. From her childhood in Syria escaping with her family from political unrest to the shores of America the journey of Rayya's life has been one of hardship but also filled with moments of triumph for her. A willful child from the time she could walk Rayya perfected the art of digging in her heels to get her way which often lead her headlong into reckless situations with punishing results. Rayya has worn many hats from rock star, hairdresser, lesbian and now novelist. She owns each of her incarnations, not looking for sympathy or acceptance but what she does do with cathartic book is help people to realize addiction can be overcome with hard work, perseverance and the love and support of family and close friends. Though the book is often a difficult read it is one I highly recommend. It's not a touchy feely light read to while away the afternoon at the cottage or beach but it is one that is full of impact. I applaud Rayya Elias for having the balls to put her life into words. Disclaimer: The ARC of this book was given to me by Viking Books in exchange for an honest and unbiased review.

I first learned about this book when I had the pleasure of attending a reading by Rayya, and I'll tell you, she's even more exciting in person. This book doesn't read like your typical memoir, instead, it's paced like one of the most exciting thrillers that you'd find today...except it's all true. Ms. Elias has lived more in 10 pages than the majority of people have in their entire lives, and she writes just like she talks, as if she were your old friend, and you were catching up after years of not speaking. I can't recommend this book enough, it embodies that true New York soul, and Rayya truly is a master of authentic style.

I chose a five star rating because I hated having to put this book down while I tended to life's chores. I read it in a day around doing some odd jobs but I certainly only wanted to be absorbed in the pages of this book. Rayya tells an honest raw story of an honest raw woman. I enjoyed reading this memoir and thank you Rayya for the day I spent along your path, I'm a better person for it :) much love xo

I was asked to review *Harley Loco*, a memoir written by a gay ex-junkie hairdresser who was born in Syria and made her way to the drug capital known as the East Village (via Detroit) where she made her name as a hairdresser/punk rock musician (yes, musician) while skipping, like Dorothy going to Oz, through all the rungs of junkie hell. I didn't want to read this book. First of all, I have personal knowledge of the Christian/middle-eastern family structure and any one of this brave girl's trifecta of secrets would take her out. For myself, a book about a world-class junkie who was also a world-class hairdresser? No. I was going on a long train ride and it was on my Kindle so I took a peek. I was surprised to see a preface by Elizabeth Gilbert of *Eat, Pray, Love*, a memoir I found difficult to swallow whole hog. Yet I was intrigued by Gilbert's unabashed adoration of Ms. Elias and her book. There are people who don't want - can't stand - an ordinary life. I know what that feels like. Rayya Elias, the narrator of this absorbing memoir could not tolerate being ordinary. If *Eat, Pray, Love* varnished the truth to make a good story, Elias left her truth beautifully unvarnished in *Harley Loco* and wrote a compelling memoir that pulled me in completely. Elias is a brave soul who is a magician at yanking her life out of the fire just as it begins to look like a descent into hard misery or worse. It's like reading a book version of *The Perils of Pauline* except Elias' perils are heartbreakingly real. With memoirs of the harrowing kind, you want to see redemption, you want a happy ending. This impressive memoir of a gay Syrian hairdresser with a musical bent whose demons come close to destroying her countless times is the happiest of endings.

I went into this memoir expecting to like it. It's about a time and place that I know well, and seems to take on issues with which many of us have or do grapple. However, the deeper I got into the book, the more I saw that the book itself is not deep. There's not nearly enough real, critical self-reflection here, and the narrative, overall, isn't solid. It reads like a series of short ideas that have been stitched together.

I heard Rayya interviewed in Australia and her warmth and humour made me want to discover more about her life. The book is well written, captures the imagination and gives insight into people living with dependencies and coping on a daily level. I'd recommend it to anyone with an interest in reality.

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