



## From Rockaway

*Jill Eisenstadt*

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Timmy and Chowderhead and Peg are lifeguards. They spend summers sitting in those tall chairs, smoking dope and staring at the waves, swatting insects, tormenting seagulls. Winters they work shit jobs like unloading trucks at Mickey's Deli. At night, winter and summer, they drink. Drink and get rowdy. Then there's Alex, the girl who gets away, not only from old boyfriend Timmy but also from "Rotaway"-on scholarship to a rich-kid's college in New England. One midsummer night when the four are reunited, tensions erupt in feats of daring and self-destruction during the wild, cathartic, near-sacred lifeguard ritual known as the Death Keg. Brilliantly capturing the restlessness and casual nihilism of working-class youth with no options, Jill Eisenstadt's acclaimed first novel startles in its power and originality, its depth of feeling, its bright and dark comic turns.

## From Rockaway Details

Date : Published May 12th 1988 by Vintage (first published 1987)

ISBN : 9780394757612

Author : Jill Eisenstadt

Format : Paperback 214 pages

Genre : Fiction, Novels, Young Adult, Coming Of Age

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## From Reader Review From Rockaway for online ebook

### Cathy says

I missed the boat when I was in high school and college. I should have spent more time drinking beer and smoking weed. Unfortunately that was my takeaway from this book.

I received this book from a Goodreads giveaway.

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### Jen says

I hated this book almost from page one. The only reason I kept going it because I'm reading it for a book club. The kids are whiny and angst and nothing happens in almost the entire book. It's just snapshots of the kids whining about life in between drinking and doing drugs and having sex. Maybe I missed the point or maybe I led a sheltered childhood but I couldn't relate to these characters at all.

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### Stefani says

A short(ish) novel about a pack of restive kids coming-of-age in Rockaway, New York, a place far enough removed from Manhattan to feel like it's in another state. As a member of the '80's literary brat pack series, *From Rockaway* has a similar premise to books like *Less Than Zero* and *Bright Lights Big City* in its depiction of a particular kind of dreary adolescent ennui in a certain time and place, though it differs from the aforementioned books in that the characters are a tad less vacuous, snorting less expensive drugs and more working class. I think it works in the sense that it's essentially an autobiographical sketch of the author's adolescence, most likely with some creative reworking. Personally, I thought the book didn't try to hard to be something it's not—it's essentially a book about nothing—but was an honest portrayal of teenagers caught between the callowness of youth and the soon-to-be responsibilities of adulthood.

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### Judy says

Really didn't quite get this book at all.

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### Holly says

I'm glad I finally got round to reading this, because it's nice to round off the loose trilogy this forms with The Rules of Attraction/Secret History, but I'm just saying there is a good reason From Rockaway is the one nobody has really heard of.

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### **Anna Franzosa says**

I love a good coming of age story, so I was excited to dive into From Rockaway. Alas, rather than experience full immersion into a nuanced world, I barely registered any depth to the story. I was also left quite angry by the actions taken by one character against a defenseless animal in the final pages of the book. Any redeeming aspects of the story were lost for me at that moment.

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### **Michelle Olms says**

Great book

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### **Tony Parsons says**

Timmy, ChowderHead & Peg had the ultimate summer job.

Lifeguards at the Rockaway.

They also did their fair share of MJ, other drugs & lots of alcohol.

Rus limo driver was taking Alex, & the other 3 to the HS Sr. prom.

Sloane, Bean, Artie, Lefty, Louie the Lump, & Schizo (lifeguard mutt) was planning on following the group all-night long.

Alicia McHenry (produce dept.) was elected prom Queen.

Summer is over, Alex & Timmy who were really never a item part their ways.

Alex is going to college out of state to study Anthropology.

June Blackmore is her roommate,

Alex & Timmy write for a while but that soon tapers off.

Kissing Joe is the terror of the campus dorm.

ChowderHead works for Mickey's Deli in the fall.

Peg decides to come back to Rockaway for the summer.

Some things never change, or maybe they do.

Ponzio, Janet, & Lars were glad to meet her.

The 4th. of July is upon them.

Warning: This book is for adults only & contains extreme violent or graphic adult content or profanity &/or sexually explicit scenarios. It may be offensive to some readers.

I did not receive any type of compensation for reading & reviewing this book. While I receive free books from publishers & authors, I am under no obligation to write a positive review. Only an honest one.

A very awesome book cover, great font & writing style. A very well written YA book. It was very easy for me to read/follow from start/finish & never a dull moment. There were no grammar/typo errors, nor any repetitive or out of line sequence sentences. Lots of exciting scenarios, with several twists/turns & a great set of unique characters to keep track of. This could also make another great YA adventure movie, or better yet a mini TV series. It was just OK for me but I will still rate it at 5 stars.

Thank you for the free Goodreads; Making Connections; Back Bay Books (Little Brown & Co.); paperback book  
Tony Parsons MSW (Washburn)

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### **Irene Grapel says**

I was looking forward to reading this book, as I spent my childhood summers on the beach at Rockaway. I was disappointed in the characters, whom I did not like at all, Timmy being the exception. The book moved at the end but was so, so slow. I couldn't wait for it to end. And, as I was reading it on a Kindle and couldn't sense the last page, it ended very precipitously.

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### **Paperback Paris says**

Jill Eisenstadt's From Rockaway captures what it is like to be a young adult that has no other options but to be in the working force.

1980s New York: Peg, Timmy, and Chowderhead are working as lifeguards at their local beach, where all there is to do is look out at the ocean, and ensure people are not drowning or smoking weed. But during the winter months, they have to work crappy jobs, like at Mickey's Deli, where they spend their days and nights loading and unloading trucks. Unfortunately for the three of them, there really are no other career options for them. They're stuck in this beach town with no drive to go out into the world and figure out what exactly it is they want to do for the rest of their lives.

"Cicadas are drawn to the green stripes on orange lifeguard bathing suits. Fly directly at you in their fat, blind cicada way, while mosquitoes, they circle with a purpose. Hover, then strike. And biting flies are silver black with green eyes. Once moths become moths they have no stomachs or mouths and they die.

Timmy lists insects to stay awake on the tower. To stop thinking of Alex. To test the brain cells his mother is convinced he's destroying. Hundreds of them at a time."

-excerpt from Jill Eisenstadt's From Rockaway

Then there's Alex, another person who was once a part of their tight-knit group. She was just like one of them, immobile, unable to set herself free from this ghost town. That was until she landed a scholarship to attend college in New England. But when she comes back for the summer and stirs up drama. The drama she brings is the fact she felt the need to leave this dead-end job and the people in it. She used to date Timmy, but when she went to college that all ended. Alex was in the inner circle with Timmy, Peg, and Chowderhead. But they felt as if she thought they weren't good enough for her and she left for New England to get a new life and new friends. But when she comes back for the summer, they still haven't gotten over her living them. So there are still unresolved feelings between all of them.

One night the four of them reunite for old time's sake; they all participate in what's called the Death Keg, which is a cathartic and sacred ritual for lifeguards, and tensions grow high. The Death Keg has been a tradition in their small beach town for a long time. And when Alex comes back they are finally able to

complete it. The night turns into a lot of destruction and daring events between the four friends.

This was a great novel that describes the struggles of what it was like for youth during the 1980s pressured into working-class life at such a young age. I liked how Eisenstadt was able to give her readers some insight into what each character was experiencing during their beginning stages into the working-class lifestyle. I would certainly recommend From Rockaway to anyone who enjoys books that reflect a culture that many young people are living in today.

—Review provided by Contributor, Jessica Duffield

**Read this and more over at Paperback Paris!**

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### **Paolo Latini says**

#### **Non si esce vivi dagli anni '80**

Un altro tassello nel manierismo carveriano degli anni '80, tra minimalismo e realismo sporco. Letto oggi sa di operazione di archeologia narrativa, la riesumazione di un cadavere fortunatamente in decomposizione per vedere com'eravamo poco tempo fa che sembra già tantissimo. From Rockaway contiene una manciata di quadretti, quasi racconti leggibili singolarmente che insieme si legano in un romanzo, e seguono le vicende di un gruppo di ragazzi a fine adolescenza nel Queens, in particolare Timmy e Alex, la seconda proiettata verso una vita migliore e diversa, verso una crescita umana, il primo schiavo dei propri dubbi, delle incertezze, della precarietà che era la precarietà della sua generazione: "you can do anything. But same as home you sit in a bar instead."

Procede tutto con estrema lentezza e con gli stessi elementi, rimescolati, di molta letteratura dell'epoca (da Mary Robison a Susan Minot a Tama Janowitz): la generazione X, il divario tra vecchie e nuove generazioni, il disagio di dover essere precari in un mondo indifferente, l'alienazione immersa in una società consumistica. Qui alcuni accenti, alcune sfumature omofobe, xenofobe e sessiste completano il quadro di una cultura in cambiamento, anche se sono sfumature sporadiche e appena accennate. Nei capitoli finali il libro acquista un'insperata verve, ma troppo tardi per salvarlo dalla mediocrità nella quale è nato.

Interessante solo se si vuole ricostruire il periodo, oggi sa di vecchio e stantio.

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### **Lindsay says**

Meh.

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### **Lauren says**

It was fun to read this again over the start of summer weekend which was also the weekend of my # mumblemumble college reunion. The novel was both a little duller and a little sadder than I remember and now, just as then, the scenes that took place at Alex's college resonated deeply.

It reminded me of the film adaptation of The Ice Storm which also captured the boredom and the everyday despair of adolescence.

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### **Peter Landau says**

What makes a book resonate? How come some novels are heralded and then fade away or just never get attention in the first place. These, among other things like what am I going to do with my kids this summer, were some thoughts that accompanied me while reading Jill Eisenstadt's debut **FROM ROCKAWAY**.

I judge a book by its cover, and I love everything published by the Vintage Contemporaries imprint, though I've only read a handful of them. It's the design, especially as it peaked for me in the 1980s, which has a nostalgic pull to a time and place that personally speak to me. I wouldn't even say they're my favorite book covers, but as a series they hold a special power over me. I buy any discovered in a used book store, and that's how I ended up with Eisenstadt's first novel on my shelf.

The fact that it's a New York story, helped in the purchase, taking place among a group of Far Rockaway, Queens, kids jerking towards adulthood. And the blurbs were poetic. I'm a sucker for blurbs and covers. At the time, I didn't know that Eisenstadt went to Bennington and was part of that group of breakthrough authors ridiculously called the Literary Brat Pack. Such knowledge didn't help me crack the paperback open.

When I read the first chapter I thought, well, maybe I should read something else. It wasn't bad, but it didn't hook me, even though I know from experience that it takes pages, maybe chapters, for me to lock in step with a writer's tone, voice, etc. I kept reading because I have a lot of fucking books and I bought them because I want to read them, so why not keep reading. Not a ringing endorsement.

But then I fell in step with Eisenstadt and her characters and the place and how growing up isn't just a biological certainty, but is more complicated. It's not a great book, or maybe it is, but to me it's still a very good one, and Eisenstadt is a talented writer, as good as many who have achieved far greater fame and recognition.

It's a crapshoot, and writing is a process that history doesn't give a damn about. It moves on and all we can do is set markers along the way, which is enough. If others find them and find themselves in them or some value in them, well, that's beyond our control.

All we can do is the best we can do and keep doing that, and after closing Eisenstadt's book I felt sad to leave it behind. That's a ringing endorsement. Well, she did write another novel, and maybe I'll read that one day too, if it's got a nice cover.

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### **Amanda says**

Interesting. Not my usual read but good.

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### **Laurie says**

Found this book in a bookstore in Prague, of all places. What a lucky find. Eisenstadt recreates with brutal honesty the stark social world of teens in 1980s Rockaway. The writing is at once blunt, lyrical, and

authentic.

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### **Lisa says**

[there's a dog who dies a mean little death (hide spoiler)]

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### **Michela says**

Liked this lot, especially the way Eisenstadt so fluidly shifts the perspective around. It really gives you a chance to know everybody. The world she describes is very whole and very small and very interesting and very sad. Really dug it.

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### **Barb says**

Super slow but finally did take off a bit in the latter half. I just felt like the author had their thoughts all over the place and it kept jumping around in the beginning. Almost quit but actually glad I finished.

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### **Tholkea says**

not sure why I had this book. not great.

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