

**Self-Published
Kindling:
Memoirs of a Homeless
Bookstore Owner**



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A young family opens a unique bookstore to help independently-published authors tell their story. But as the traditional publishing industry begins to fall, e-books dominate the book market, and the economy slows, the family winds up homeless-- a big secret to keep, as business owners. While some authors struggle with addiction and others struggle to tell their story, a young family struggles simply to survive.

Self-Published Kindling: Memoirs of a Homeless Bookstore Owner Details

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Author : Mik Everett

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Mik Everett

From Reader Review Self-Published Kindling: Memoirs of a Homeless Bookstore Owner for online ebook

Simon says

The writing seems a bit too raw and straightforward - almost like actually reading a non-edited diary. But i suppose it fits the subject. Not all of it is that interesting, and there are a few too many typos, so i tended towards 3 stars. But there's so much warm honesty on a tale worth telling here that unlike life and society, i'm willing to give this homeless author the benefit of kindness.

Alfred Baudisch says

Shocking

A shocking yet pleasing read. Self publishing, small business ownership, writing, homelessness, it is all here in this book. It helps we see clearly things that we take for granted are out of reach for many people, specially when going homeless.

Jane Thomson says

I really enjoyed this book - I found it shocking, and absorbing, and very thought-provoking.

The book explores the reality of homelessness and self-publishing in gruesome detail. In a quiet way, it reveals the truth about the US - the heartlessness of authorities who ask a woman with a young family to submit endless paperwork before they'll give out food stamps, the businesses who want homeless people moved on, the landlords who evict the family over the weekend when they have no access to services - and then the kindness of other homeless people who buy food and pitch in to help in a way that should shame the richer members of society. On the one hand, reading, I felt, hmm, this is more than I need to know in terms of the minutiae of daily life - but on the other hand I thought, all this detail really brings it home. Like evil, homelessness is banal.

The other aspect of the book was self-publishing. What a great idea - to set up a bookshop carrying the works of self-publishing authors! And how true - there's a lot of shame in writing a book that doesn't sell and isn't accepted by the authorities of publishing. But as Mik says, every self-published author has put a lot of their life into their book, so there's value in every work. And lots of value in this one. I will look for other books by Mik.

My one criticism would be that the book does need more editing. And I'm not sure about the title.

Lisa Gaunky says

Real Life

This is a stark and honest a depiction of life in our depressed and fucked up country. I have been dirt poor, but not homeless. This is not the way anyone in our country should be forced to live, but I doubt it will

change anytime soon. What a struggle. Thank you for pulling no punches.

Bud Smith says

An excellent book. Desires a wide audience. Between its heart, humor and message, this was a compelling book with some heavy duty writing in it. Consider it an instruction manual.

Paige says

This is more than just a book about homelessness. Our society compartmentalizes homelessness; we put it aside. It is "us" and it is "them". Mik Everett's Self-Published Kindling breaks down the wall between "us" and "them". Even beyond that, it is the story of a young mother attempting to do the best she can for her children while running a business. The secrecy surrounding the family's situation forces us to think: how many people do I know that may be secretly homeless?

The book also serves as a critique of our modern publishing industry, and it brings issues to the forefront that I had never before considered. John's rant regarding jobs and the economy explains how just about every Millennial feels about our situation in this economy. All in all, the book serves as both a social critique as well as an economic one.

More than that, though, it is impossible to detach oneself from the family by the time you've finished reading. You root for them. You want the best for them, even if you probably would have ignored their eyes on the street if they asked you for your help, and that's the part of the book that really allows for some serious introspection.

Mik Everett's stunning honesty and lyrically gritty style once again come together into one of the best books I have ever read, and certainly one of the best books I've read this year.

Sepideh says

Interesting subject matter, but demonstrates the pitfalls of self-publishing—parts of the book are incomprehensible due to errors.

Michelle says

I love indie literary works, and this book won me over when I read: “At night when I can’t sleep, I string verses together, memorizing them a line at a time. (I say it craftily like that. People appreciate the metaphor.”

Living out of an RV in a Wal-mart parking lot with her husband and two children, Mik offers an intimate view of the working poor. Through all the bullshit dealings with social services, running her bookshop and keeping her children fed, she still found the time to watch movies with her husband, take her kids to the park and share food and joints with her parking lot neighbors.

Affliction memoirs are hit or miss, and this was a hit. There was no self-pity here—frustration, need, and even bursts of humor, but no wallowing, resentment or alienation. Even down and out, she held on to her compassion and kindness.

For someone so young, Mik has had one hell of a life dealing with cancer, destitution, and homelessness. But her life is also beautiful and richly filled with family, adventure, art, and quirky characters.

Having just finished *A Movable Feast*, I was reminded of Hadley and Zelda. The Zeldas like the novelty of risk so they choose the path of comfortable discomfort and call it adventure. The Hadleys follow their hearts and learn to use slop buckets in Paris.

Keeping with the Hemingway comparison, the writing was frank and unadorned. A reader will be hard pressed to find a superfluous of or that. This intrepid, artsy and interesting woman can write and most importantly—she knows how to live. Mik is a strong woman. She may not know where she'll be tomorrow, but she knows where she is today. I look forward to reading more of her work.

Fiona Anne Warner says

Interesting read about becoming and being homeless. Can happen to anyone, and for a variety of reasons. Makes it seem less removed than I once thought.

janet says

Awesome Read!

Fantastic style, casual and direct. Authors, the homeless, those concerned with social justice and realities of those down on their luck (like working two jobs and still being homeless) should read. Honest and beautiful and sad and funny. Love this family. ?

E.L. Farris says

This was the best book I've read in 2013. Seriously. This isn't hyperbole. I've read a few excellent ones, like Ann Leary's *A Good House* and Christine Nolfi's *Treasure Me*. *Kindling* was special. Unique.

I am a picky, grouchy author of literary fiction myself. I read tons of other books, and most of them disappoint me so bad, I don't even bother reviewing them. This second novel by Mik Everett, however, did not disappoint me. In fact, it enthralled me from the very first to the very last lyrical sentence.

The main characters in Everett's book felt like pairs of old Levis, patched and worn, frayed and perfectly imperfect, much like the jeans worn by a couple of the homeless "travelers" in *Kindling*. Everett takes the reader directly into the characters' world, without warning, initiation, or explanation. You start reading and it feels not so much like jumping into a freezing pool, but more like wandering into a fascinating ghost town that doesn't scare you in the least. As you wade into this homeless family's world, you find yourself inside a broken-down RV that's illegally parked on the outskirts of an evil Wal-Mart.

Everett speaks much of Kerouac's *On the Road*, and for good reason. Like that idiosyncratic, most thoroughly American of novels, *Kindling* is also a book about people living on the edge of acceptable societal norms. There's a semi-tragic aspect to *Kindling*, but Everett draws attention to the socio-economic issues with great nuance and with a comic undertone following the homeless family around. The comic undertone attaches to the family much like the thick dust in the Wal-Mart parking lot, and it keeps the sadness you would otherwise feel a little easier to take.

As far as what I took away from *Kindling*, it wasn't anger or outrage or sadness. It was nostalgia for something I've never had, but want more of: the next book Everett writes. If I could award more than five stars, I would.

By E.L. Farris, #1 Amazon Bestselling Author

Zeljko says

It really opened my eyes

I couldn't stop reading until the very end. Ending is awesome btw, anything else wouldn't do. I have to think this through, now that I read it, but I already want to get as many other people to read this.

I wish author good fortune in his glorious life! :)

Stephen Kennedy says

The beauty of Mik Everett's writing can be summed up in her own words:

"It's a bit funny how we came to live in a motorhome in the first place. It's not funny at all, but it's a story I can tell like a joke."

The beauty of her writing is how easy she makes it to relate to desperate situations. Her key tool in this aim is Humor. I use the capital, proper noun, form of the word because her jokes have far more in common with masters of Satire, like Twain, than they do with the peddlers of offense like Daniel Tosh.

Both have their audience, obviously, but unlike comedians that mock a situation for a quick double-shot of Schadenfreude (if you don't know German, or haven't seen *Avenue Q*, it's a German word for the enjoyment of other people's failure or pain), Everett's humor has a clear ever present purpose to it. The points she makes, what ridicule she does present, is in the hope of things changing.

Self-Published *Kindling: Memoirs of a Homeless Bookstore Owner* is a book about as strange as its title. It's fairly easy to get caught up in the day to day narrative of both ensuring basic needs are met for her family (things like applying for food-stamps, applying for shelters, and occasionally shop-lifting as needed to fill the gaps between) and doing everything in her power to ensure that her lack of permanent residence doesn't become public knowledge, something that would be absolutely disastrous for the owner of a small business.

Everett deals with other business owners handing her petitions to eradicate the “homeless problem” or otherwise shut down invaluable humanitarian services, an application for a homeless shelter requiring a proof of residency, and the general demands of living as a homeless family with small children with bravado and courage that I have no idea if I could muster, so yes, it is very easy to get caught up in that narrative. It’s an absolutely fascinating one.

But strangely, this isn’t a book about homelessness. Yes, Mik Everett makes no effort to hide her views on services for the homeless or poverty stricken, and yes, she paints achingly beautiful portraits of the people around her, many of which turn up for what is probably the most frustratingly appropriate conclusion I’ve ever seen in a self-published project. To warn you, you won’t be satisfied with the ending, but it certainly feels right. I wish I could share the quote it ends with and its juxtaposition with the purpose of the novel, but I don’t want to ruin an amazing read. This, instead, is a book about writing, and the state of writing and publishing in the United States.

It’s broader than that, including wonderful discussions about the economy in general:

“I’ve never fucking worked in an economy that had ‘jobs.’ So people keep saying, oh, the jobs will come back, the economy will improve, and I just don’t fucking believe them. I’m not going to sit around on my ass waiting for jobs that I really don’t believe in. They’re [like] fucking unicorns, man. An economy with ‘jobs’ available, real jobs where you can make a living, it’s a fucking myth. It hasn’t existed since our parents were our age. And they want us to sit around and work our asses off in unpaid internships, waiting for these mythological jobs to come back. It’s like waiting for the Second Coming. I’m not going to work for nothing while I wait for Jesus to come back with his jobs, and reward all of us who have been faithful and worked for nothing while we waited. Fuck that. I’m a fucking atheist. I’m going to make my own job.”

It includes anecdotes about parenting that anyone with small children can probably relate to, and underneath it all is an undercurrent of “Millennial”ness that anyone of my generation can probably relate to, drug use and distrust of the society she was born into are no exception, but, remarkably, these are just pieces of her life. Like any other element, the book transcends these too. In other words, this is a book with drugs in it, but it is by no means a book about drugs.

Again, this is a book about writing, about writing the book you’re reading, actually.

This is a book about why we choose to write, and that is the most fascinating part about it. In an age when self-publishing is becoming to be more accepted as, to borrow a phrase, Artisanal Publishing rather than the derogatory Vanity Publishing it was maybe a decade ago, it’s easy to accept that some people write just to write, but that isn’t quite true. Certainly some people write just to write, but self-publishing is more than just saying “hey, I made something”, even though that’s the tone many young authors (myself included) occasionally take. The choice to share your work this way, to face a publishing field that will probably never make you any sort of money, to face a world “more full of writers than readers [...] Real readers”, to quote the book again, it demands a drive.

Everett’s drive is a passion for writing and using writing to improve the world around her.

The beauty of her writing, and I know this is the third time I’m saying this, is that she somehow manages to weave her idealistic goals into a realistic narrative, for all she suffers, she never loses hope, and she never resorts to beating us over the head with her point. What makes her a masterful writer is that she takes all these seemingly unrelated threads of her life, and manages to present them to us with definite and understandable meaning. She has the great skill of making her personal life a sort of fable, without resorting

to mythologizing herself, while presenting it in an almost diary format. I am jealous of this skill. Extremely jealous of it, and I have nothing but congratulations for her considering this was written over the course of two weeks, two weeks unwillingly spent without a permanent address.

Mik Everett doesn't come off as better than you, and she certainly doesn't come off as someone who knows everything, but the fact of the matter is, the structure and craft of this novel indicates someone who probably knows a thing or two, and knows how to share it without making you feel like you're somehow lesser for not knowing them.

It's a phenomenal book.

It's a short read. I read the 150 pages in about three 2-3 hour sittings, and it was well worth the time investment.

Erika Price says

I have been following Mik Everett's burgeoning writing career with heavily piqued interest for a little while now. At first, I was just aware of her as a writer on Tumblr with a seriously shitty (and long) run of misfortune; then I realized that through the entire struggle, she was writing, editing, formatting, and working to publish a goddamned book.

It seemed impossible to me that someone could bang out a memoir in a few weeks while being homeless, on the road, and raising a young child. It was even harder to imagine that the book would be this gripping and simply well-written. Which it is. Mik is an accomplished and professional-grade writer already at 22.

But I didn't go into this book expecting that. I jumped in because I was intrigued by Mik's ongoing troubles. At 22, Everett has been through a shit-ton. She's suffered from lupus and cancer, she's been raising a little girl for years, she's run (and lost) a bookstore, she's lived in a motor home in the rear of a Wal-Mart parking lot, scrounging for food, and she's escaped a seriously poisonous abusive relationship and been forced to drive across the country with her child in-tow. And then the car got hit by lightening.

Mik's book follows some (but not all) of these events, and mainly focuses on the period when she and her (now) ex-partner were running the bookstore and trying to keep it afloat while spending their nights in a broken-down mobile home in the Wal-Mart lot with no electricity and no water.

In *Self-Published Kindling*, the reader is given an entirely unfamiliar portrait of homelessness; we follow Mik and her family to the food pantries, where they meet fellow poets and patrons of the bookstore. Mik, her children, and her partner befriend other homeless people in the parking lot, who lend food, help tow their car, and share weed and deep conversations about the state of the country and the future of art.

This is suburban homelessness, straight out of Longmont Colorado. The family steals tools from Wal-Mart and grills dinner on an electric Foreman plugged into a camping structure. Everett and her children ride the bus from work to the Wal-Mart daily, prompting well-natured curiosity from the driver. Because Everett has two kids in tow and a laptop on which she is writing her book, no one suspects she's homeless.

And I should reiterate: Everett wrote the book during that stint of homelessness and finished editing it in a women's shelter and on the road. How in the fuck?

Despite its subject matter, this is not a voyeuristic or self-pitying memoir of suffering and dreams deferred. Mik gives the reader an even-handed, reasonable description of her circumstances, how she came to be in them, and how she navigates them. There is never an inkling of bitterness or a single rumination. In fact, there is nothing depressing about this book; Everett's strength and matter-of-fact tenacity is a marvel and a joy to follow.

The book works so well, in part, due to Mik's simple, declarative language. The author is plainly interested in telling her story while also providing useful, enlightening information about the bureaucracy of being homeless and the economics of the publishing industry. As such, her tome is both informative and engrossing. I tore through the book in an evening.

This brings me to the book's only shortcomings: it ends too quickly, and too abruptly for my tastes. This makes sense, considering the circumstances under which it was written. Rather than attaining any resolution or promising any future continuation, Mik's book ends with an undermining quote from her ex-partner. "Where is [the book] going?" he asks. Is Everett asking us this? I'd rather have her tell us.

While I was disappointed when the book ended, I can answer that question. This book is going places. I was so engrossed in her story and enchanted by her spare, clean writing style that I immediately went out and bought her previous novel, *Turtle*.

You should pick up *Self-Published Kindling* if you're at all interested in memoir, social justice, artisanal publishing, writing, or human nature. Shit, you should pick it up if you like solid writing from an up-and-coming author. You'll want to be aboard this train when it takes off. Mik Everett is a writer to watch.

mark says

Disclosure – I know the author and am represented in the text, as well as quoted. But, big but, I had no idea that (= notes being taken and a book being written) was going on, nor was I aware of any of the author's back story. All I was aware of was that this person owned and operated a bookstore in Longmont, Colorado, in the Spring of 2013. That said, I'm going to be brief.

This book is raw, shocking, disturbing, heart-wrenching, and unambiguous. Insurgent and emergent. You **SHOULD** read it (buy it); if you're interested in the current state of writing, publishing, small business, homelessness, and/or family poverty in America. To be clear – I don't condone all the behaviors' acted out, positions' taken, or choices' made by the author, but it is a remarkable book. This "memoir" is audacious and honest; and the author, all of twenty-two years old when she wrote it, has something to say and says it well. She has a point. The fact that she wrote this book literally on the fly (see pages 88 and 89 – the best writing in the book!) is a statement in itself, and speaks to the author's talent.

Buy this book (from Amazon) and read it. It is a quick read (=150 pages & <60,000 words & costs < \$12.00. \$3. on Kindle.) *Self-Published Kindling* might just be the spark that ignites the fire that burns down the old and worn out, out-dated, book and publishing industry — a wildfire that roars through a dilapidated neighborhood. Well ... at the least a harbinger – insurgent and emergent.

Wednesday, November 14, 2013

