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The House On First Street: My New Orleans Story



Synopsis

Julia Reed went to New Orleans in 1991 to cover the reelection of former (and currently incarcerated) governor Edwin Edwards. Seduced by the city's sauntering pace, its rich flavors and exotic atmosphere, she was never entirely able to leave again. After almost fifteen years of living like a vagabond on her reporter's schedule, she got married and bought a house in the historic Garden District. Four weeks after she moved in, Hurricane Katrina struck. With her house as the center of her own personal storm as well as the ever-evolving stage set for her new life as an upstanding citizen, Reed traces the fates of all who enter to wine, dine (at her table for twenty-four), tear down walls, install fixtures, throw fits and generally leave their mark on the house on First Street. There's Antoine, Reed's beloved homeless handyman with an unfortunate habit of landing in jail; JoAnn Clevenger, the Auntie Mame-like restaurateur who got her start mixing drinks for Dizzy Gillespie and selling flowers from a cart; Eddie, the supremely laid-back contractor with Hollywood ambitions; and, with the arrival of Katrina, the boys from the Oklahoma National Guard, fleets of door-kicking animal rescuers and the self-appointed (and occasionally naked) neighborhood watchman. Finally, there's the literally clueless detective who investigates the robbery in which the first draft of this book was stolen. Through it all, Reed discovers there really is no place like home. Rich with sumptuous details and with the author's trademark humor well in the fore, *The House on First Street* is the chronicle of a remarkable and often hilarious homecoming, as well as a thoroughly original tribute to our country's most original city.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

• Reed is a breezy writer who nicely captures the despair and elation of seeing the city slowly come back to life. • (Chicago Sun-Times) • What emerges from a heartrending, soul-stirring, rib-tickling and palate-prickling banquet of details is why Ms. Reed cannot leave New Orleans: love. It's an undevoted devotion to a place and particularity that is admirable, and almost astonishing, in our increasingly deracinated culture. • (Wall Street Journal) • Reed shares this sliver of her life with a light, conversational tone, and though somewhat tangential, she conveys the richness of pace and flavor of the Big Easy as life gets back to "normal" without pretense. • (Christian Science Monitor) • Reed recounts with humor those and other home-improvement nightmares in a story that is part "Money Pitt" and part love letter to her adopted home town. • (Washington Post, Front Page Feature) • Reed will enthrall you with the Big Easy spirit of rebuilding, determination, and great eats along the way. • (Madison County Herald) • Julia Reed knows how to live. She also knows how best to write about it in hilarious, sensual and mouthwatering detail....This book is so poignant and delicious, you may want to eat it instead of read it. • (Adriana Trigiani, bestselling author of the Big Stone Gap series and Lucia, Lucia) • In The House on First Street, Julia Reed, one of the cleverest crafters of prose writing today, tackles the country's most fascinating and frustrating city....With her usual keen eye for the quirky and outrageous, Reed finds much to amuse the reader in this delightful volume. • (Cokie Roberts, ABC and NPR News, author of LADIES OF LIBERTY) • Wow! This is the most brilliant and delightful memoir to come out of post-Katrina New Orleans. With great literary panache and a throaty humor, Julia Reed captures the magical allure of the city, its food and its people...destined to be a classic. • (Walter Isaacson, bestselling author of Einstein and Benjamin Franklin.)

Julia Reed grew up in Greenville, Mississippi. She is a contributing editor at Newsweek and is the author of the essay collection Queen of the Turtle Derby. She lives in New Orleans.

As a native of Louisiana, I was enchanted and quite grateful for this entertaining book of my beloved New Orleans. Some reviewers have been critical of the author stating that they purchased the book in order to learn more about the aftermath of Katrina. The sub-title of this book is "MY New Orleans Story"... NOT my Katrina story. The author delights in the quirky-ness of natives and locals and by doing so brings back so many memories of the times I have enjoyed in New Orleans. In reality, New Orleans is worth visiting now as it was before Katrina. The spirit and character of this great and unique city remain. The author captures the flavor of New Orleans. I enjoyed this book and hope you will also!

This was the first book I have ever read that was written by Julia Reed. I purchased this book because it was one we were reading in a book club I was part of. This book is the account of the author and when she purchased a house to renovate in New Orleans and then Hurricane Katrina destroyed the area. Overall I was pretty bored with this book. I really expected there to be more of a storyline having to do with the struggles of rebuilding after Katrina, but this was more like a traveler's guide to dining and food in New Orleans. It just didn't seem to capture the devastation that took place in that area the way I had expected it to. I guess I just felt like the author took a very serious situation and made light of it in some ways.

This is a great read for New Orleanians and others. I could see myself walking through the places she did. I too remember the sudden fear of Katrina.

Funny and interesting story of how folks got on with life after Katrina. Southern wit at its best!

I'm from New Orleans, and really enjoyed this book. Ms. Reed captured the true spirit of New Orleans and her residents. This story tells the heartbreak of Katrina, while portraying the resiliency of its citizens. It made me homesick!

Fun to read. A great combination of recent history (the New Orleans flood) and decorating, Both are things I find interesting.

As the renovator of two Victorian homes there in the 1960's, I found this a delightful read! The writer encountered some of the same issues! New Orleans has its own eccentricities, and the allure to make you believe them!

Love anything Julia Reed writes!

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