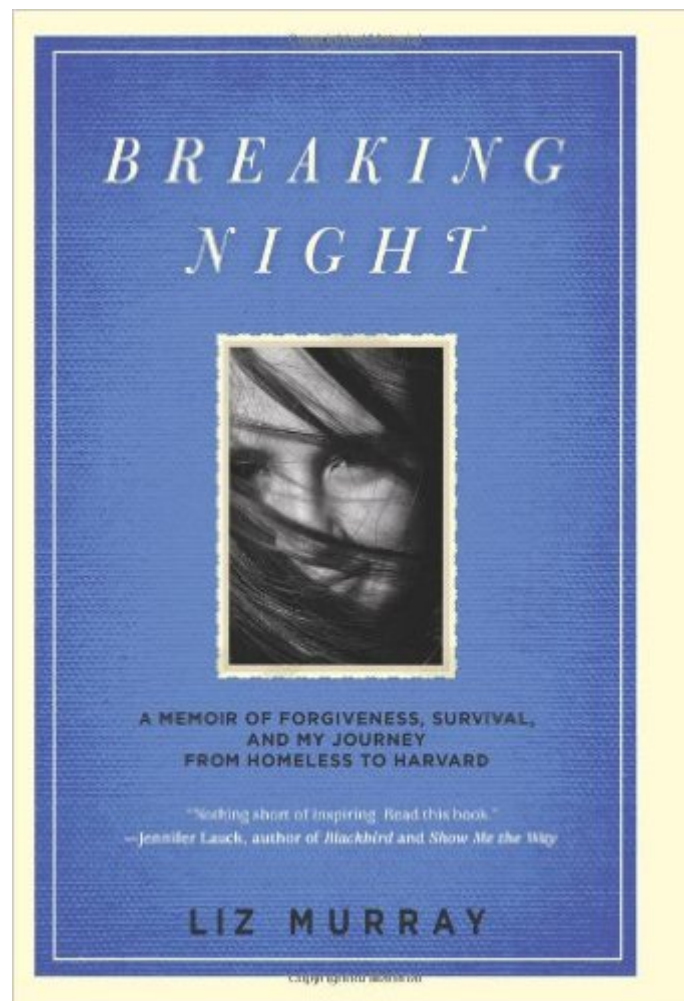


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# Breaking Night: A Memoir Of Forgiveness, Survival, And My Journey From Homeless To Harvard



## Synopsis

In the vein of *The Glass Castle*, *Breaking Night* is the stunning memoir of a young woman who at age fifteen was living on the streets, and who eventually made it into Harvard. Liz Murray was born to loving but drug-addicted parents in the Bronx. In school she was taunted for her dirty clothing and lice-infested hair, eventually skipping so many classes that she was put into a girls' home. At age fifteen, Liz found herself on the streets when her family finally unraveled. She learned to scrape by, foraging for food and riding subways all night to have a warm place to sleep. When Liz's mother died of AIDS, she decided to take control of her own destiny and go back to high school, often completing her assignments in the hallways and subway stations where she slept. Liz squeezed four years of high school into two, while homeless; won a New York Times scholarship; and made it into the Ivy League. *Breaking Night* is an unforgettable and beautifully written story of one young woman's indomitable spirit to survive and prevail, against all odds.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

*Breaking Night* is gripping story about the child of two chronic drug abusers and how she managed to finally break the cycle of dysfunction that turned her life into a nightmare of hunger and homelessness. Despite the bleakness of her upbringing, Liz Murray, much like Jeannette Walls in *The Glass Castle*, does not play the victim card. In fact, it's not until she is finally safe in her own apartment and about to enroll in college does Liz allow herself to fully grieve over the way she was

raised. Liz Murray was saved by school. The young girl who hated the institution and became a truant finally realizes at age 17 that the only way for her to improve her circumstances is through getting an education, but arriving at that conclusion was no easy task. Liz and her older sister Lisa were raised in abject poverty in the Bronx. Their parents would routinely leave them alone in their apartment while they were out all night scoring drugs. Their mother Jean was legally blind and received government assistance, but as soon as the monthly checks arrived they would be spent on drugs. The girls were so hungry that they ate mayonnaise sandwiches and cherry Chapstick. But Liz still loved both of her parents and even tried to shield them from Lisa's criticism. Things go from bad to worse after Liz' mother leaves her father to move in with another man who has a job and lives in a better neighborhood saying that it's the only way that she can stay off drugs. Liz refuses to leave her father and is placed in a group home because of truancy and is later released into the custody of her mother's boyfriend. This marks the beginning of a downward spiral that leads to Liz living on the streets and stealing to survive.

"For years, maybe for my whole life, it felt as though there was a brick wall down the middle of everything... On one side of the wall there was society, and on the other side there was me, us, the people in the place I came from. Separate... The feeling in my heart was of the world being divided into an 'us' versus 'them,' and everyone on the other side of the wall felt like 'those people.' The everyday working people on the train, the smart students who raised their hands in class and got everything right, the functional families, the people who went away to college --- they all felt like 'those people' to me. And then there were people like us: the dropouts, welfare cases, truants, and discipline problems. Different." Sure, "tortured souls" memoirs are a dime a dozen these days. The more harrowing the author's story, the more accolades the author gets from the press and the longer the book stays on bestseller lists. Are all of these sagas worth reading? Not by a long shot. It's not to say these writers with unfortunate backgrounds are milking their situations (except, of course, when they are), or that their stories don't deserve to be told (except when the book's purpose seems to be a self-pity party or a PR stunt). But there needs to be some sort of distinction between a run-of-the-mill woe-is-me story and a book that is well-thought out, well-crafted, and well-deserving of respect and praise. Liz Murray's memoir *BREAKING NIGHT* is an example of the latter. The now-29-year-old author's story is certainly shocking.

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