



Rat Bohemia

By Sarah Schulman

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"More persuasively than any other contemporary novelist, Sarah Schulman traces the ways in which the disenfranchisement that begins as a political evil pervades every aspect of life, from the metaphysical and spiritual to the most intimate moments of two people together."-Tony Kushner

"My surrender to *Rat Bohemia* is a testimonial to its gimlet-eyed accuracy, its zero-degree honesty. . . . [It blows] the traditional novel off its hinges."-Edmund White, *The New York Times Book Review*

First published in 1995, this award-winning novel is a bold, achingly honest story set in the "rat bohemia" of New York City, whose huddled masses include gay men and lesbians abandoned by their families and forced to find new bonds with one another in the wake of this loss. Navigating the currents of the city are three friends: Rita Mae, a rat exterminator; Killer, a career plant-waterer; and David, an HIV-positive writer. Together, they seek new ways to be truthful and honest about their lives as others around them avert their glances. Alternately elegiac, defiant, and funny, *Rat Bohemia* is an expansive novel about how one can cope with loss and heal the wounds of the past by reinventing oneself in the city.

Rat Bohemia won the Ferro-Grumley Award for Lesbian Fiction and was named one of the "100 Best Gay and Lesbian Novels of All Time" by the Publishing Triangle.

Sarah Schulman is the author of eleven books, including the novel *The Child* (2006). She lives in New York.

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Rat Bohemia By Sarah Schulman Bibliography

- Sales Rank: #434565 in eBooks
- Published on: 2008-04-01
- Released on: 2008-04-01
- Format: Kindle eBook

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

Sarah Schulman's **Rat Bohemia** is a witty, moving and sometimes shocking look at how lesbians and gay men are treated by their biological families. Set in contemporary New York, Schulman's characters--Rita, a rat exterminator who works for the city, Killer, a lesbian bohemian, and David, a gay writer with AIDS--are all trying to figure out how to live in a city that is falling apart and how to make peace with the families who ignore them or treat them badly. Schulman's eye for urban detail and her wicked, ironic sense of humor all contribute to making this a profoundly affecting and deeply disturbing look at lesbian and gay life today.

From Publishers Weekly

Parental abandonment is the theme of this dreary tale of gay and lesbian life on the edge in New York City. Rita Mae Weems, whose father kicked her out at the age of 16, still hears the disappointment in his voice when she phones him years later. She works as a rat exterminator for the city's Department of Health, and everywhere she looks she sees decay and vermin, both human and animal. Her friend David, a young writer dying of AIDS, spends his last months mourning his dead lover and his dead friends and meditating on why his parents hate him. Pondering the narrow boundaries of parental love, he observes that "they're glad we're dying... really they're relieved." Killer, their chronically unemployed friend, is more philosophical, if also more simplistic. "We're bohemians," she says proudly. "We don't have those dominant cultural values." Indeed, these three would refuse to fit into the mainstream, even if the mainstream were generous. And they're united in their scorn of Muriel Kay Starr, a lesbian writer who "moved to another neighborhood and got closer to power" and wrote a closeted novel called *Good and Bad*, in which they (David, Killer and Rita) appear as characters. For no apparent reason, Schulman (*Empathy*) tacks on, as an "appendix," the first four chapters of *Good and Bad*. Very little binds this "appendix" to the four other sections that comprise the novel; in fact, very little, other than the presence of the principal characters and a theme of resentment of parents, binds the other four sections to each other. Only the dying David, ironically, seems alive, animated by his rage at his impending death. His loneliness and eloquent anguish only partially salvage this meandering tale of a city so befouled that it leaves the reader wishing for a bath.

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From Library Journal

Schulman's continuing chronicle of contemporary gay and lesbian life (e.g., *Empathy*, LJ 11/1/92) resonates with depth and emotion as she focuses on the lives of three individuals abandoned by their parents because of their homosexuality. David is an HIV-positive activist and writer coping with both his illness and the rejection of his parents. Rita is a rat exterminator for New York City, a streetwise lesbian whose father threw her out at the age of 16. Killer is a professional plant waterer, looking for a lover to replace the family whose rigid, old-world morality cannot bend to encompass a lesbian daughter. Using rats as a metaphor for the spread of disease, the ugliness of human behavior, and the deterioration of civility in general, Schulman creates a heroine who gamely goes after the rats one by one, refusing to cede her city to its population in the same way that she refuses to compromise her values to accommodate straight society. Because of the author's gifted ear for dialog and witty repartee, the novel is not only a poignant cry for understanding from a community that has had to reinvent family in order to survive emotionally but also a dense and vital portrait of life on the fringes of society. Highly recommended. ?Andrea Caron Kempf, Johnson Cty. Community Coll. Lib., Overland Park, Kan.

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Users Review

From reader reviews:

Frank Hall:

Have you spare time for any day? What do you do when you have considerably more or little spare time? That's why, you can choose the suitable activity with regard to spend your time. Any person spent their particular spare time to take a move, shopping, or went to the Mall. How about open or even read a book eligible Rat Bohemia? Maybe it is to be best activity for you. You understand beside you can spend your time with your favorite's book, you can cleverer than before. Do you agree with the opinion or you have additional opinion?

Emile Guzman:

Now a day people that Living in the era just where everything reachable by match the internet and the resources inside it can be true or not call for people to be aware of each information they get. How many people to be smart in receiving any information nowadays? Of course the solution is reading a book. Reading a book can help men and women out of this uncertainty Information specially this Rat Bohemia book since this book offers you rich information and knowledge. Of course the information in this book hundred % guarantees there is no doubt in it you may already know.

Jennifer Crowe:

People live in this new day of lifestyle always aim to and must have the extra time or they will get wide range of stress from both way of life and work. So , once we ask do people have free time, we will say absolutely indeed. People is human not just a robot. Then we question again, what kind of activity do you possess when the spare time coming to an individual of course your answer will probably unlimited right. Then do you ever try this one, reading publications. It can be your alternative with spending your spare time, the book you have read is usually Rat Bohemia.

Bonnie Camacho:

Playing with family within a park, coming to see the water world or hanging out with buddies is thing that usually you have done when you have spare time, subsequently why you don't try point that really opposite from that. Just one activity that make you not experience tired but still relaxing, trilling like on roller coaster you already been ride on and with addition details. Even you love Rat Bohemia, you can enjoy both. It is very good combination right, you still would like to miss it? What kind of hang type is it? Oh can occur its mind hangout people. What? Still don't get it, oh come on its named reading friends.

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