



# How to Stop Time: Heroin from A to Z

Ann Marlowe

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*Ann Marlowe*

## **How to Stop Time: Heroin from A to Z** Ann Marlowe

**How to Stop Time** is an important contemporary contribution to the classic accounts of the seductive attractions and dangerous distractions of drug use.

In this hypnotic and piercingly intelligent chronicle, Ann Marlowe dissects her former heroin habit, and recounts in harrowing detail the rigors and realities of life under the influence while building a successful Wall Street career and establishing a reputation as a critic in the alternative press. A one-time Harvard grad student in philosophy, Marlowe ruthlessly examines the paradoxical nature of addiction, and connects her own experience to a wider discussion of heroin in the context of our post-consumer, digital society.

## **How to Stop Time: Heroin from A to Z Details**

Date : Published November 7th 2000 by Anchor (first published September 9th 1999)

ISBN : 9780385720168

Author : Ann Marlowe

Format : Paperback 320 pages

Genre : Autobiography, Memoir, Nonfiction, Biography

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# From Reader Review **How to Stop Time: Heroin from A to Z** for online ebook

## **Zachary says**

This is a smart book from a smart author. The perspective on false perceptions of heroin use is unique to say the least. I can't believe this has flown under the radar for a wider audience than simply Village Voice readers for nearly 14 years.

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## **Abby says**

I took this book out from the library with the expectation that I would skim it quickly, hopefully finding a few good quotes for an essay I'm writing. Once I started, however, I could not stop myself from reading each and every captivating word. In *How to Stop Time*, Ann Marlowe takes us through her life from the lens of her heroin addiction. While she claims that she wasn't a junkie or hardcore addict like many of her friends, the drug definitely seemed to be a large part of her life and she was certainly dependent on it.

The most notable part of this memoir was its structure-- the book was set up like a dictionary, stories and memories prompted by an alphabetical list of words (thus Heroin from A to Z). While other readers may have found this a bit gimmick-y, I truly enjoyed the shift from traditional memoir structure. As a fellow writer, it made me truly reflect on Marlowe's control of her words and writing-- something that I truly envy.

I'd really recommend this for anyone interested in memoirs, specifically those pertaining to addiction. I've read a lot of eating disorder memoirs-- not traditionally thought of as "addictions," but over the years I have realized that my own battle with anorexia was an addiction in and of itself.

5 STARS \*\*\*\*\*

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## **Chris Kelly says**

I really struggled to enjoy this book on any level whatsoever.

Firstly, the A-Z dictionary style format means that it is pretty light on narrative, and the glimpses we are offered into Marlowe's addiction are not particularly engaging or revealing.

Secondly, I didn't connect emotionally with this book at all - HTST lacks the tortured urgency of William S Burroughs' masterpiece, *Junkie*, and offers none of the vitality or grim desperation of Irvine Welsh's *Trainspotting* trilogy. It just plods along, saying nothing much about anything at all.

The book offers nothing more than a superficial glance at the most banal and tawdry details of the life of a Heroin addict. In short, it is boring. Extremely boring.

There is no doubt, however, that Marlowe thinks she has written something pretty special. Sadly, she is more concerned with showcasing her knowledge of dope culture and 'the scene' than she is about saying anything

profound about addiction. Her self assured and condescending tone grated on me throughout (can you tell?)

About halfway through the book, Marlowe reveals that she has received a lot of criticism from former heroin users who claim that her \$10 per day, always-snorted-never-injected heroin 'habit' did not constitute a real addiction - That she was more interested in being part of the scene, than she was in the drug itself. I have a lot of sympathy with this view - to me, Marlowe comes across as something of a tourist, playing at addiction.

So, if you are looking for a book that deals with the grim, self destructive urge to anaesthetise yourself against an increasingly hopeless world, best to give this one a miss. Similarly, if you are looking to read something profound about the nature of addiction and the human condition, ditto.

However, if you are looking for a self indulgent, patronising analysis of how a rich, middle class white woman spent her weekends snorting the occasional line of heroin at various rock shows across New York, this just might be the book for you.

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### **Stefanie says**

This fearless memoir is going to turn everything you thought about heroin addicts on its head. It's the most honest tale chronicling both the good and bad of being heavily involved in a drug that I've ever read, and also weaves in Marlowe's struggle with her family and other relationship issues - personal challenges that underlie everyone's story, whether they choose to use drugs as a coping mechanism or not.

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### **Kimberly says**

hated, hated, and hated- author was totally unlikable- not that an author has to be likable but you can like unlikable authors- but nothing about this book/author is likable. She claims she was addicted yet never experienced withdrawal or the pains of addiction- then you weren't addicted-not in the physical sense-not in any sense- it is called a casual user- yes heroin addicts can be casual users. The book was slow and boring, the author comes off as pretentious and you just can't warm up to her book or her story. I usually like, or at least find a likable quality, in most books-yeah, no- not this one.

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### **Andrea says**

What a crock of self-satisfied, inaccurate crap!

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### **Richard says**

The writing is very good, and there are a lot of good ideas here. In particular, I like her musings about how we try to stop time. The only fault I'd mention, is that in parts she, I think, mistakenly presents her experience as universal. She's clearly a very unique person. Highly intelligent, educated, talented, ambitious. And she comes from a very particular place in society. So there were moments, especially in the first half, where she'd make a comment that vexed me a bit. Overall, however, I found the book very enjoyable. Some

of the segments of this book resonated with me very much.

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### **Julia says**

A very un-shrill, unsensational look at heroin and addiction (which of course makes a lot of people very upset.) There is a healthy dose of skepticism and distance but also a sense of nostalgia and tenderness toward the "scene" and the time. The format itself is a joke referring to the author's strained relationship with "alphabetical order" (totally arbitrary despite the appearance of order) and also yet another attempt to "stop time" in that it overrides chronological order, becoming a stream-of-consciousness web of associations, complete with a few "hyperlinks" - references to other entries going both forward and backward in time. There is a running theme of the author's struggle to reconcile her bourgeois up-bringing and capitalist inclinations with the subculture that she finds herself drawn to, while they are ironically revealed to be not all that different. She draws some interesting parallels between the consumption of heroin and mainstream consumerism, as well as mainstream advertising and the "branding" of heroin (irony upon irony and yet the joke is still on the user/consumer.)

I must say that I have developed quite an obsession with Ann Marlowe after reading this.

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### **Diann Blakely says**

Ann Marlowe's formidably intelligent memoir finds its structure in the drug's various and surprising lessons. "There are a million things you can learn from [doing dope]," she writes, "but they are only fully available to you once you stop using it." While Marlowe seeks to debunk heroin's glamour ("the drug isn't really that great"), she argues convincingly that opiates freed her mind for artistic effort, shaking loose just enough of the relentless logic she acquired in her studies at Harvard College and Business School. Not that Marlowe has collapsed into aesthetic pretension or fuzzy-headedness: her book, a series of "stringent," alphabetically organized meditations, inherits its structure from Pascal, to cite one obvious forebear. Yet Marlowe's forte, like Elizabeth Wurtzel's in *BITCH*, is the startling metaphoric connection.

For example, under the rubric of "Athletics," she explores the link between heroin and sports. Marlowe maintains that she never became truly addicted, in part because her system, bolstered with martial arts and daily runs, flushed away the heroin with speedy efficiency. Nor was she an atypical user: Most of Marlowe's junkie friends were athletes, blessed with a store of energy not easily burned off in Manhattan's confines unless workouts alternated with visits to Avenues C and D. "Heroin provides," she summarizes, "the all-absorbing, anxiety-deflecting presentness which we can also find in sports." And if heroin users court a variety of physical and psychological risks, Marlowe goes on to imply, so do marathon runners, yoga fanatics, and even spa junkies like the late Princess Diana, whose favorite fixes were high colonics and aromatherapy.

Marlowe's alphabetical organization—a system that lends itself to "arbitrary," "random," or lyrical thought, as she points out—implies that, like Wurtzel, she has found that her experiences and thought-processes can't be smoothly yoked to the traditional Rising Action/Climax/Falling Action grid discussed above. But had Marlowe's narrative structure mirrored too closely the heroin user's quest for static oblivion, *HOW TO STOP TIME* would itself have become static, even unreadably dull. On the contrary, her narrative structure makes possible a kind of suspense: One glances at the next page, wonders what words like "democracy" and "dentist" could possibly be doing in a book about heroin addiction, and reads on.

(originally published in the NASHVILLE SCENE)

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### **Candace says**

As someone who represents heroin addicts on a daily basis, I loathed the author. Her pretension and lack of awareness of her own wealthy, white privilege (even though she swears on several occasions that she looks Hispanic) is infuriating. That said, the book was an interesting insight to the life of a chronic user (not an addict).

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### **Sandra says**

**a**

**anthony**

he called me out on my all too generous rating.

**b**

**book**

this book now gets one star instead of four.

**c**

**crack**

because I must have been smoking rocks when I gave this book four stars. Oh yeah, I'm in graduate school *and* I smoke crack. I'm pretty fucking awesome, aren't I?

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### **Tori Miller says**

I found the alphabetical listings to be a fascinating way to tell a story. I disliked the author very much and I found her to be a complete snob, but I can't deny the book 4 stars.

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### **Jennifer says**

The best "addiction memoir" that I've ever read. Stylistically amazing, and shows how an unusual style can work with the material, rather than seem like a gimmick (David Shields, are you listening?) I have read this several times, and gotten more out of it each time.

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### **Marci says**

I disliked the format of breaking up the prose by letters of the alphabet, but the book succeeded despite that. I wish the editor had realized that it didn't need a gimmick.

Wholly unromantic, this book dramatizes neither the gritty reality of heroin use, nor its superb bliss. Instead, it's an aching, thoughtful memoir of a young life, a life which includes a heroin habit. The book's setting - in 1990s New York City - is integral to the story, and its resolution. Marlowe's story is as much about the people whom she meets when she does drugs, and the city that holds them all.

Still, providing the most lucid description of heroin's effects that I've ever read, it is worthy of being included in the canon of drug literature. (And with an interest in the Romantic poets, jazz artists, and the Beats, I've read a lot of that.) It's unique partly because of its female voice, but finally because it contains no regrets. It doesn't read like it was written by an addict. The lack of clichés is surprising and sometimes frightening; it's easier to accept drug use if it's fueled by something uncontrollable.

It's good to have our expectations confounded. Sometimes, picking up heroin doesn't lead you to the devil; it's just part of a well-thought life.

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### **Sarah Smith says**

I first read this book in high school--I bought it at St. Mark's Bookshop during a Thanksgiving in New York with my parents during which we had the traditional meal at a diner in Hell's Kitchen populated on that day only by cab drivers. I had, I think, blintzes. Anyway, the genre of drug memoir is a strict one, very prescriptive in terms of how repentant the addict should be, how low rock bottom ought to be, and how glowingly self-righteous the emerged new soul will sound in the retelling. Ann Marlowe is strident in her abandonment of those tropes, choosing instead to chart her memoir through alphabetically organized vignettes, some philosophical and others heartlessly concrete. The approach may sound played by now--the book came out about ten years ago, after all, way before the tidal wave of memoirs and the "lyric essay"--but I can promise that it's weirdly suited to a woman holding a Harvard MA in Philosophy who wants to revisit the particularities of heroin addiction. I take a hard line on memoirs, especially those that mine perennially juicy topics, but I guarantee that this drug memoir is on a different order. Even on re-reading, and with a wholly different level of fascination with urban drug narratives.

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