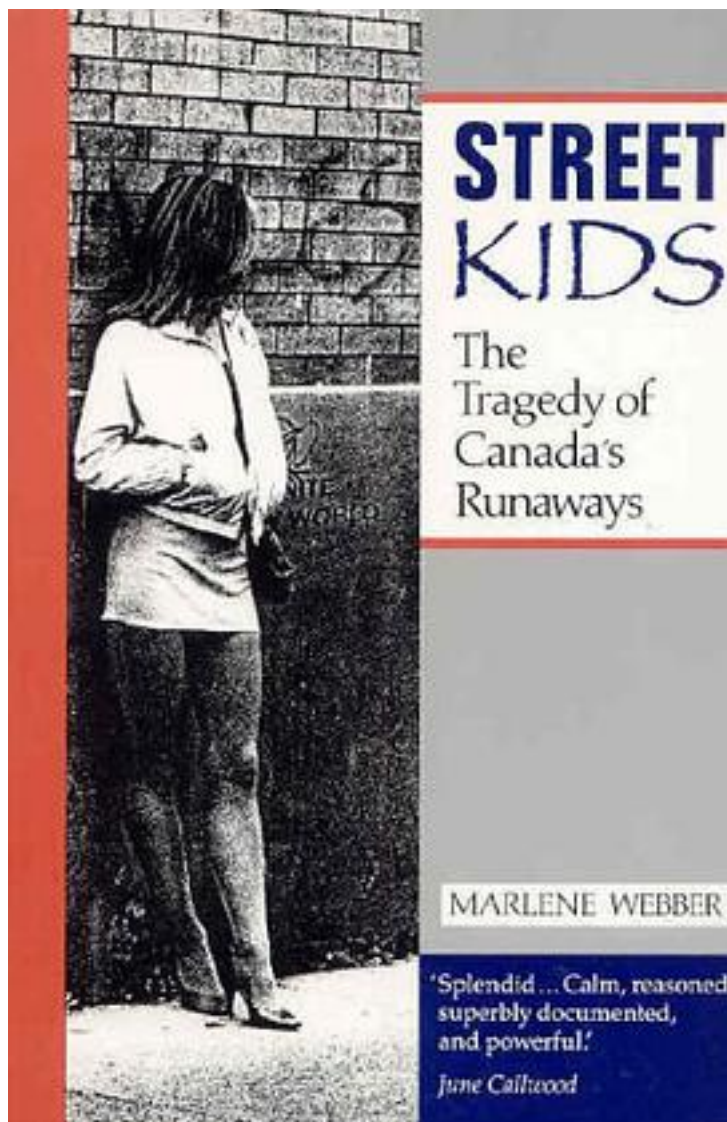


Street Kids



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In cities across North America, teenage runaways are struggling to stay alive. Some don't make it to adulthood. Some do, but their lives rarely rise above the despair that brought them to the streets in the first place. A few manage to beat the street, to get their lives back on track. In this disturbing account Marlene Webber draws on extensive interviews with these kids to explore the realities of street life, its attraction, and its consequences. Street kids like to project an image of themselves as free-wheeling rebels who relish life on the wild side. All brashness and bombast, they strut around inner cities panhandling, posturing, and prostituting themselves. Labelled society's bad boys and girls, they often live up to their image. But as sixteen-year-old Eugene tells us, the street forces bravado on homeless adolescents, 'but underneath, a lot of kids are plenty scared.' Eugene is only one of many street kids who talked to Webber in major cities across Canada. She lets her subjects tell their own stories; their voices are sometimes brave, sometimes bitter, often heartbreaking. Common elements in their personal accounts suggest why increasing numbers of teenagers - especially girls and relatively rich kids - now flee their families. Common threads in their lives on the street help us understand why even the most determined young people are daunted by the overwhelming odds stacked against their getting out. Webber cuts a comprehensible path through the tangle of forces, including family breakdown and social-service failure, that accelerate the tragedy of Canada's runaways. She suggests measures that might help more of them beat the streets.

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