FOREWORD REVIEWS THE INDIE WE LOVE.

General

Manhattan On the Rocks
Janice Harayda
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Given the earthquake of interest in the finale of HBOs *Sex and the City*—to say nothing of the sales of books like *Bridget Joness Diary* and *The Rules: Time-Tested Secrets for Capturing the Heart of Mr. Right*—it is no wonder that writers continue to mine the plentiful vein of stories about young single women in search of happiness.

A former editor at *Glamour*, the author has now written her second novel chronicling the comic vicissitudes of an educated single-something straddling the seemingly incompatible worlds of the Midwest and New York City. *Manhattan, On the Rocks* follows Laura Smart from the comfortable obscurity of Cleveland to high-rise hijinks in Manhattans publishing and society landscape.

Even before she can catch her plane at Cleveland Airport, Laura finds herself in need of rescue by Tom Moran, an executive of the company she is to work for, whose traveling incognito in the absurd disguise of a sports fanatic. The novel follows Lauras tribulations as she is hired to the staff of *Cassandra*, a fictional publication patterned on magazines like Oprahs *O*; negotiates the flirtations of Simon, her transatlantic editor; searches for an apartment; and wrestles with relentless doubts as to her capacity to find love in the beauty-obsessed culture she now promotes.

While Laura undergoes a Pygmalion-like transformation from sweatshirts to Chanel, the novel passes through a similar transition. What starts out as a genuinely witty comedy in the best British tradition of Evelyn Waugh turns into a talkative romance in what could be called the "near" Jane Austen manner.

Harayda, who has also authored a non-fiction guide to being single, writes as though the subject of stylish female singledom, while good for a few sophisticated laughs, is really a condition in need of remedy. That *Sex and the City*'s long-awaited conclusion yielded not the assertion of strong single womanhood but the desirability of a strong, rich husband confirms the

tenor of the times. Fiercely cultivated independence and liberated sexuality are accessories gratefully discarded like last years fashions when Haraydas version of Mr. Big—Tom Moran—fights his way through a slapstick cascade of misunderstandings and male-female friction in order to declare his true intentions.

Manhattan, On the Rocks will make readers laugh out loud, and the Hungarian-American, basketball-playing heroine is more human than one might expect. As American men and women continue to marry later in life, the anxiety meter of single women who "have it all," but would really prefer an engagement ring—and a man who has grabbed the brass ring—will keep audiences amused a while longer.

Vince Brewton