



Homeless but Not Hopeless

“You don’t ‘get’ another shot. You ‘take’ it!” That was the advice given by E. Jean Carroll, popular advice columnist for the venerable fashion magazine, *Elle*. She proffered that bit of wisdom to Brianna Karp, a young lady who found herself homeless after being laid off in July 2008 from her \$50,000 a year job as an executive assistant at the headquarters of Kelley Blue Book in California.



Karp, 24, soon lost more than her job, as she was unable to make enough money temping to pay the \$1,500 a month rent at her small home in Costa Mesa, California. She had just a few hundred dollars left in her hemorrhaging savings account, so as a last resort, she moved into the pickup truck she inherited from her deceased father. She parked the truck in the relative safety of the parking lot of the local Wal-Mart. From there she took advantage of nearby public wifi hotspots and began sending out resumes to the tune of 30 or 40 a day. Karp refused to idly bemoan her significant setbacks, and she faithfully pursued every imaginable avenue for gainful employment.

One unusual aspect of Karp’s self-promotion campaign was the starting of a blog, [girlsguidetohomelessness.com](#). The blog was not only a means of marketing her talents, but its primary function was therapeutic, as it kept Karp in touch with the wider world from which the effects of her dire economic situation had separated her. Her blog attracted the attention of other people suffering similarly, and comments from those followers encouraged Karp to keep going and not give up on the noble quest that seemed at times so futile.

One of the first homeless readers of Karp’s blog was Matt Barnes, an Englishman living in Scotland as a result of his own series of tragic circumstances. Barnes was himself a homeless blogger, in fact. Barnes was beguiled by Karp’s prose and began leaving her motivational and complimentary comments on her blog and before long he immigrated to California pursuing a relationship with Karp and to throw his lot in with hers.

Karp’s luck was to change dramatically after an fortuitous email to *Elle* advice columnist, E. Jean Carroll. Karp, devastated after blowing a job interview, pleaded with E. JeanCarrol, “How does one get another shot when one screws up a job interview?” After offering the advice about taking one’s own shot, Carroll additionally offered Karp a four-month telecommuting job and further promised her, “At



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the end of the four months, if you don't have a job and an awesome place to live, I will become YOUR intern."

Astonishingly, Karp hadn't read Carroll's reply and when she read about it accidentally on another website months later, she immediately and enthusiastically reached out to Carroll, hoping she hadn't blown yet another chance to find a job. Carroll assured Karp that the offer was still on the table, and Karp began working part-time for Carroll, while continuing to look for full-time work.

Amazingly, Karp's fortunes continue to improve as *Elle* magazine has invited her to blog about her remarkable life experiences at their online presence, [elle.com](#). Karp is still homeless, but her prospects have brightened, and she will soon be once again on her own feet and out of the pickup she has called home for months.

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