



# Five Flights Up and Other New York Apartment Stories

*Toni Schlesinger*

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A top house, a pumping station, a maid's room, a homeless center, a former brothel, a Richard Meier building, a circus trailer, a sail boat, a skyscraper, buildings named Esther and Loraine—just a few of the places New Yorkers call home. For the past eight years writer Toni Schlesinger has been bringing us these "conversation places" in her weekly column in the *Village Voice*. Through her incisive questioning, original writing, and comic parallel reveries, Schlesinger creates miniature documentaries on the lives, passions, hopes, and heartbreaks of many of New York City's millions.

*Five Flights Up* chronicles people living in New York's extremes, occupying 150-square-foot spaces, paying over half their income for rent, living eight in an apartment, and taking showers in twos to save time. These are people who make movies in their living room and then sleep in it later. They surround themselves with their baby teeth, with 500 volumes of *Moby Dick*, plaster rabbits, birds' nests, 30 modernist chairs, 50 loaves of Wonder Bread, and more. In Schlesinger's hands, their stories are much more than novelties.

Artists, actors, dancers, librarians, social workers, bus boys, bankers, porn stars, au pairs, urban planners, bakers, shamans, masseuses, web designers, and students come alive when they discuss where they came from and where they're going. Each interview is a vivid and insightful portrait, revealing the creative energy, camaraderie, desperation, and hope that fuel the daily lives of people in New York and everywhere.

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