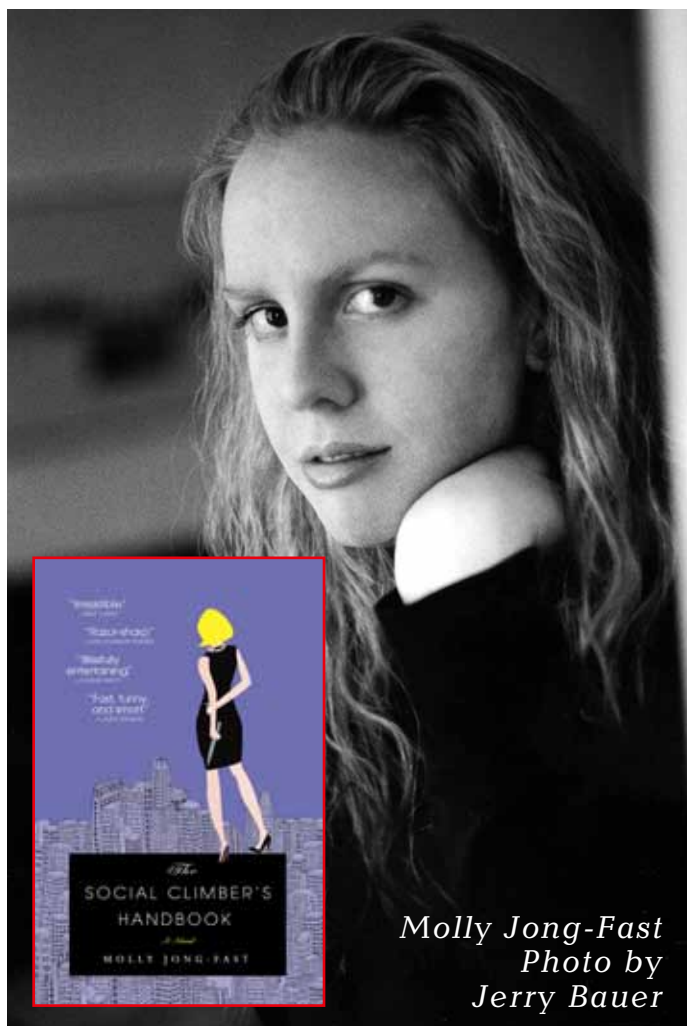


The Social Climber's Handbook

BY DORRI OLDS



Molly Jong-Fast
Photo by
Jerry Bauer

Publisher's Weekly refers to Daisy Greenbaum in Molly Jong-Fast's new novel, *The Social Climber's Handbook* (Villard/Random House), as the "Upper East Side's most unlikely murderess.... [It's] a campy bloodbath à la Patrick Bateman in Jimmy Choos."

Molly Jong-Fast's satire of Upper East Side elitists takes place during the Wall Street crash of 2008 and centers on socialite Daisy Greenbaum's devotion to her husband's paycheck. Though murder starts out as a means to protect her lifestyle, it soon becomes an effective stress reliever. Think female Dexter in Prada on Park Avenue.

Jong-Fast, 32, is married to CUNY professor Matthew Greenfield, 46, and they live with their three children, Max, 7, and twins Darwin and Bette, 3, in a four bedroom East 86th Street co-op that overlooks Madison Avenue and cost \$5 million in 2007.

She and her husband met on Salon.com personals. "My handle was brontesister. Anybody who didn't know who Bronte was, they were out."

Jong-Fast is the daughter of Erica Jong (*Fear of Flying*) and Jong's third husband, Jonathan Fast (*Ceremonial Violence: Understanding Columbine and Other School Rampage Shootings*). Her father's father, Howard Fast, was a blacklisted member of the Communist Party who wrote *Spartacus* while in jail for contempt. Her maternal grandmother was "a poor Russian Jew with Rockefeller-like pretensions" and a wannabe painter who "took her clothes off at least once on a crosstown bus."

When asked if she's been to therapy Jong-Fast said, "Yeah, most of life minus 3 years. I had the usual [issues] and a mean fear of flying. Now my self-esteem is like medium. I don't think I'll look back 10 years from now and be embarrassed."

She summed up childhood as "fatness, frizzy hair and sweatpants with rhinestones."

When asked if it was weird being the daughter of a famous writer who evoked love/hate reactions from people she said, "Yes, but most of the time no one noticed. Famous writers are not that famous."

"It's not as bad as people might think to be Erica Jong's daughter. Some people love to hate my Mom. She was incredibly self-absorbed. But she raised me alone and worked hard to support us."

"I write books, then I throw them out and rewrite the whole book. Every book has been like that." *Normal Girl*, her debut novel, was about a poor little rich girl, Miranda, who was 19 and addicted to cocaine, Valium and heroin. Jong-Fast's only comment on her own teen years was, "Rehab at 19."

One of Jong-Fast's favorite writers is Patricia Highsmith, the author of *Strangers on a Train* and *The Talented Mr. Ripley*. "She's obsessed with serial killers. I really like the idea of female serial killers. People said, 'Oh

Aileen Wuornos was a lesbian so that's why she was a serial killer' but I totally believe that a hetero woman could be a serial killer too." *Social Climber's* genre is edgy-chicklet, hilarious, with some jaded New York meanness thrown in for fun. Fans of *The Nanny Diaries* will gobble this book up in a day.

"I'm really self-conscious about reviews. I don't think anybody else gets as much venom on the Internet. People say things like, 'She is a horrible person who should just die.'" Yet Jong-Fast never considered opting out of public life. "I thought because I was born into a family I love, who are all crazy and famous writers, that it was like being in a witness protection program—you can't ever get out."

In a *Wall Street Journal* essay she wrote, "I was born during the era of bell bottoms. The year was 1978." That was the same year her mother met and married her father. "To say they were hippies greatly understates the facts."

"It was because of my mother's hard work that I have the life I do now. She worked hard so that the women of my generation could have the choice to work or stay home. She slept in hotel rooms in San Diego so I could cuddle with my children. She spoke to large groups of women in Toledo so I could work at the school book fair. We can devote ourselves to work, or we can decide to be 1950s June Cleaver types. And that's because of the sacrifices that my mom and her feminist comrades made.

My mother made sacrifices so I could have choices, and perhaps that makes her a better mother than I will ever be."

To learn more and order the book visit mollyjongfast.com

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