

[PDF] Dress Codes: Of Three Girlhoods---My Mother's, My Father's, And Mine

Noelle Howey - pdf download free book

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Description:

If the only time you think you've seen a transsexual is on the Jerry Springer show, Noelle Howey's thoughtful, funny memoir of her suburban childhood with a cross-dressing dad may leave you wondering where all the fireworks are. The first half of *Dress Codes* is like anyone's story of parental neglect. "I had a dad possibly like yours," Howey explains, "sullen, sporadically hostile, frequently vacant." It was her loving mother who eventually confided her father's secret when Howey was 15, by which time it came as a relief that the remoteness, the drinking, the mood swings were not the young Noelle's fault, but the result of her father's constantly stifled "yearning for angora." Although the early chapters are interesting, *Dress Codes* really takes off at the halfway point, when her father realized he was not a heterosexual male transvestite, but a woman. His sexual transition, and the family's awkward adjustment to it--including the author's inability in high school to keep any secret

aside from this One Big Secret--is written with warmth and insight, and colored with a lonely girl's lingering disappointment. --*Regina Marler* --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

From Publishers Weekly In this rich memoir, Howey details not one life, but three. It's a difficult juggling act, but it pays off beautifully, for the story of her father's coming out as a male-to-female transsexual is only part of a larger narrative of growing up female in America. Howey's writing is neither sensationalistic nor condescendingly cheery; this is a loving portrait of a girl's complicated relationship to her father's femininity and her own. The author, co-editor of *Out of the Ordinary: Essays on Growing Up with Gay, Lesbian and Transgender Parents*, nicely juxtaposes her childhood dress-up games and clandestine sexual experimentation (she wanted to be Madonna) with her father's secret penchant for soft scarves and pumps (he dreamed of becoming Annette Funicello). As a teenager, Howey was impatient with the attention that her father's adventures always garnered and told her parents, both of whom she enjoyed a healthy relationship with, about her sex life: "It was a power maneuver on my part.... Dad kept raising the bar of what Mom and I could accept with equanimity, and I felt justified in doing the same." She is no less forthcoming about the odd celebrity status having a transsexual parent granted her at her ultra-liberal college, elevating her "above all the other upper-middle-class white chicks in thrift wear roaming the commons." Howey's candid, funny writing gives this memoir the cast of fiction, perhaps not surprising in a book honest enough to admit "we all reconstruct our lives in reverse, altering our own anecdotes and stories year after year in order to make them more congruent with our present-day selves." Agent, Karen Gerwin. (May)Forecast: Sure, there are lots of books out there on families with transgendered parents. But how many are memoirs? And how many are as funny and candid as this one? Howey's work will do splendidly.

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