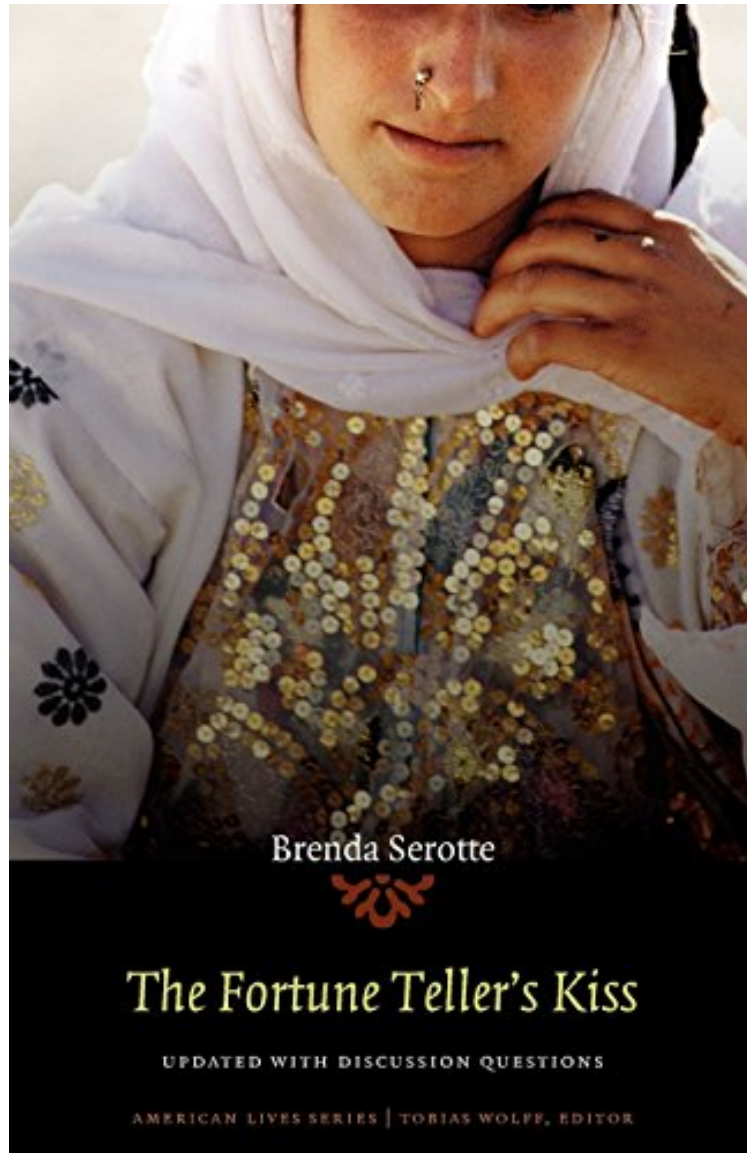


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The Fortune Teller's Kiss (American Lives)

Brenda Serotte

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#686490 in Books Brenda Serotte 2012-02-01 Original language: English PDF # 1 8.53 x .60 x 5.52l, .73 #File Name: 0803243537220 pages The Fortune Teller's Kiss | File size: 31.Mb

Brenda Serotte : The Fortune Teller's Kiss (American Lives) before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Fortune Teller's Kiss (American Lives):

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Too depressing for this reader By Regular Jane Very disappointing book. It was interesting to learn about the author's family background at the beginning of the book. But most of the book was about her unfortunate hospitalization for polio. Her treatment in the hospital and by her mother was sad, disturbing and the last thing I wanted to read. I bought the book for a book club. I'm sorry I wasted my money. If

someone is particularly interested in how children with polio were treated years ago, this book is an illuminating source of information. But if you're looking for a good book that does not use most of its pages reflecting the sadness of a dysfunctional family in America who have a child with polio and the disturbing treatment of that child in an institution caring for children with polio, do not buy this book. 1 of 1 people found the following review helpful.

Delightful read
By nanhum
Serotte grew up the daughter of Sephardic Jewish Turkish, Ladino speaking immigrants in the Bronx. She gives us a glimpse of several years in her life when she developed polio. Because of her cultural background and particularly quirky family, this was no common American experience. Serotte draws the reader into the experience by her vivid and often hilarious description of her feelings and perceptions at that time. It often made this reviewer wonder how someone can remember such detail from when they were nine years old--but then maybe I am the one with the faulty memory. I was particularly drawn to her fortune teller grandmother and wished I could have learned more about her. This was a hard- to- put- down book, as i was eager to find out what was going to befall poor Brenda next . She includes photos of some of her immediate and extended family--always adds so much more to the story when you can place a face with the name--and character. Two photos however were non sequiters--her mother with a caption of an apparent job description that was never mentioned in the story. There was also a photo of someone who was never mentioned. And there were no photos of family written of I wish were there. Minor quibbles. The world Serotte invites us into is a one generation experience. While many of the cultural practices may continue, the world that was brought to America by the first generation immigrants must largely be lost to the second. That more than anything may be why this book is such a treasure. 1 of 1 people found the following review helpful.

Not terribly well written or edited
By Joanne
Not terribly well written or edited. A story is begun, stopped, and picked up again chapters later. Obviously, her contracting polio as a young girl was a defining moment in her life and she spends much time describing her experiences in hospital but that trauma has little to do with the Sephardic experience on the Lower East Side and in the Bronx--which is the reason why I purchased the book for my aunt to read. However, my aunt appreciated and enjoyed those few nuggets

There was always the incantation: Whoever wishes you harm, may harm come to them! And just in case that didnt work, there were garlic and cloves to repel the Evil Eyeor, better yet, the dried foreskin from a baby boys circumcision, ground to a fine powder. But whatever precautions Brenda Serotte was subjected to, they were not enough. Shortly before her eighth birthday, in the fall of 1954, she came down with poliopainfully singled out in a world already marked by differences. Her bout with the dreaded disease is at the heart of this poignant and heartbreakingly hilarious memoir of growing up a Sephardic Jew among Ashkenazi neighbors in the Bronx. This was a world of belly dancers and fortune tellers, shelter drills and vast quantities of Mediterranean food; a world of staunchly joined and endlessly contrary aunts and uncles, all drawn here in loving, merciless detail. The Fortune Tellers Kiss is a heartfelt tribute to a disappearing culture and a paean to the authors truly quirky clan, especially her beloved champion, her father. It is also a deft and intimate cultural history of the Bronx fifty years ago and of its middle-class inhabitants, their attitudes toward contagious illness, womanly beauty, poverty, and belonging.

From Publishers Weekly
Poet Serotte relives a childhood cataclysm in this culture-rich, affecting memoir, part of the American Lives literary nonfiction series. In 1954 she contracted polio, mere months before Jonas Salk perfected his vaccine coincidence that struck her Sephardic Jewish household as especially cruel. In this lively subculture, a minority among even New York City's Jews, Serotte earned high praise for her beauty, grace and belly dancing, grooming herself for the proverbial sultan's harem. Old World mysticism imbued everyday life, adding color to a bleak immigrant aesthetic. The family matriarch, Nona Behora, was revered for her ability to read fortunes in Turkish coffee grounds; before her death, she divined misfortune for the author, her granddaughter. The family desperately spouted medieval benedictions to deflect the evil eye, but a prolonged, agonizing hospital stay forced Serotte to work her own miracles with "courage I pulled from somewhere." She explores the identity that confounds her: first, her "bouillabaisse" blood line and, later, the immobility that suspends her between "normal" and "special," as she limns her family with wry affection that doesn't blot out their flaws. The drama of Serotte's struggle to walk again, filtered through the tender emotion of youth, creates an aromatic narrative brew that reveals her destiny in riveting detail. (Mar.) Copyright Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

From Booklist
Serotte's memoir tells of her growing up in the Bronx in a Sephardic Jewish family among Ashkenazi neighbors. She writes of her Turkish-born relatives, their customs and rituals, and how she came down with polio shortly before her eighth birthday. "One day I was a wild child, running and free; the next, an invalid surrounded by weeping women." She tells of the High Holy Days in the Sephardic synagogue attended by the "marginally poor." There were candy-store owners, factory workers, shoe salesmen, and the occasional professional. Descriptions of her family members are what make this memoir a joy to read. All of Serotte's parents' differences were dissolved when they were dancing, and one of her grandmother's fortune-telling abilities enabled her to determine a person's future by reading grounds left in a cup of Turkish coffee. Much of The Fortune Teller's Kiss chronicles the author's recovery from polio. Serotte is a marvelous storyteller, and this book, one of the American Lives Series, is a profoundly moving

memoir. George Cohen Copyright American Library Association. All rights reserved "Poet Serotte relives a childhood cataclysm in this culture-rich, affecting memoir, part of the American Lives literary nonfiction series. In 1954 she contracted polio, mere months before Jonas Salk perfected his vaccine-a coincidence that struck her Sephardic Jewish household as especially cruel. . . . She explores the identity that confounds her: first, her 'bouillabaisse' blood line and, later, the immobility that suspends her between 'normal' and 'special,' as she limns her family with wry affection that doesn't blot out their flaws. The drama of Serotte's struggle to walk again, filtered through the tender emotion of youth, creates an aromatic narrative brew that reveals her destiny in riveting detail."Publishers Weekly