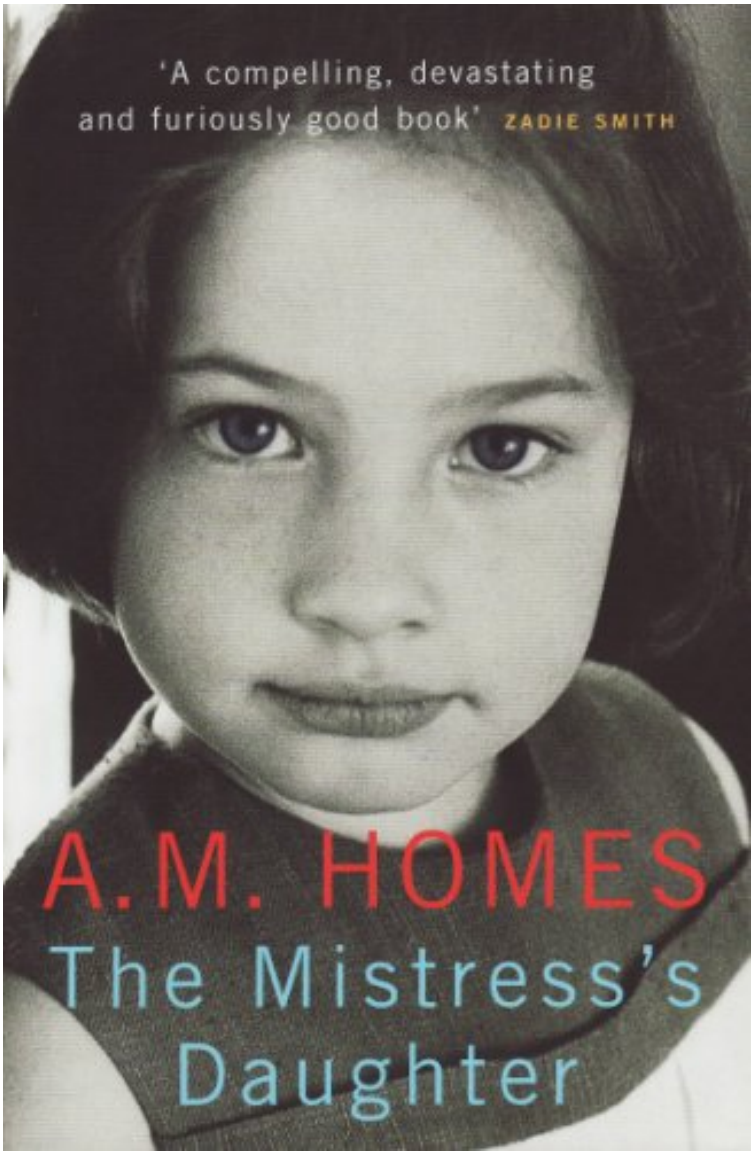
The Mistress's Daughter: A Memoir



Par A.M. Homes
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(Download free pdf) The Mistress's Daughter: A Memoir

Par A.M. Homes : The Mistress's Daughter: A Memoir before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Mistress's Daughter: A Memoir:

Description :

Prsentation de l'diteurOn the day that A. M. Homes was born in 1961, she was given up for adoption. Her birth parents were a twenty-two year old woman and an older married man with whom she was having an affair. Thirty years later, out of the blue, Homes was contacted by a lawyer on behalf of her birth mother, and they began to correspond; her biological father contacted her soon after. These two individuals and their effect on the adult Homes are strange and unexpected, and the story spirals into something utterly raw and hilarious, heartbreaking and absurd. Along the way, Homes describes the clash between her childhood fantasies of her birth parents and the disappointing reality. She writes about the experience of experiencing biological resemblance for the first time (in 'My Father's Ass') and the addictiveness of the genealogical

research she embarks on. She reflects on the significance of DNA testing and having two mothers and two fathers and unearths profound truths about her family and herself. Finally, she writes movingly about her own baby daughter and the way she has recently helped to mend Homes' fractured life.From Publishers WeeklyJane Adams turns her considerable talents to Homes's memoir about meeting her biological parents when she was in her early 30s. Adams captures the narrator and all the members of both the adoptive and biological families. Her rendition of Homes is so smart and urbane yet wary that listeners might assume that Homes herself is telling her own story. Ellen Ballman, the biological mother, is portrayed as Auntie Mame gone bad-her boisterous voice quickly descends from that of a woman overcome with joy at hearing her daughter to whiny demands to be taken care of. Perhaps Ellen is a bit too shrill-almost anyone would hang up after hearing this voice on the other end of a phone. Adams portrays Norman Hecht, also referred to as "the Father," with a voice as large as his considerable fortune; he cons his daughter into taking a DNA test, then refuses to give her the results. Even Adams can't make the second half of the book exciting, as she reads page after page of questions planned for a deposition. Simultaneous release with the Viking hardcover (s, Jan. 15). Copyright Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.From The Washington Post's Book World/washingtonpost.com ed by Michael Mewshaw In 2004 the New Yorker published an excerpt from A.M. Homes's memoir, The Mistress's Daughter. Stylish, provocative and deeply personal, the piece dealt with the author's adoption and reunion with her biological parents. Such stories often have the cloying inevitability of Hallmark cards, but Homes deployed the same gimlet eye and ironic sensibility that distinguish her fiction. The book, which was said to be forthcoming, held out tantalizing promise.Homes's birth mother, Ellen, had sought her out, seemingly driven less by the desire to meet the child she had given up than by personal demons. "You should adopt me and take good care of me," Ellen declared. When her baffled daughter didn't respond enthusiastically enough, Ellen phoned on Valentine's Day and told her, "You can just go to the roof of your building and jump off." As a teenager in Washington, Ellen had worked for a wealthy, older married man who took her as his mistress, strung her along with promises to leave his wife, then dumped her when she became pregnant. It gradually crosses Homes's mind that Ellen may be more interested in reconnecting with her ex-lover than with her.As for Homes's biological father, Norman, he arranges to rendezvous with Homes in a hotel bar and gives the creepy impression that he might shift his lecherous feelings to his daughter. Like Ellen, he has no interest in Homes's needs or emotions. When not treating her as a tart, he infantilizes her, sending a gold locket for her 32nd birthday, a gift that's "more like pre-jewelry, like a training bra." Promising to accept her into his family and introduce her to her half-siblings, he asks only that she submit to a DNA test. But when the test proves his paternity, he distances himself. It dawns on Homes that he had been hoping for an excuse to exclude her from his family and estate.While Norman keeps Homes in a separate compartment of his life, much as he did with his mistress, Ellen intrudes at every opportunity, even stalking Homes at literary events. When Ellen suffers serious medical problems, she expects Homes to donate a kidney. Not surprisingly, Homes reacts with a mixture of curiosity and revulsion, and a pulse of rage starts to beat against the sassy attitude the author tries to strike. When irony proves inadequate, the harried daughter pulls away. Yet after Ellen dies, Homes feels haunted by "the profound loss of a piece of myself that I never knew, a piece that I pushed away because it was so frightening." Roughly at this point, the excerpt in the New Yorker ended. Now, more than two years later, with the complete book in hand, one suspects that Homes had difficulty discovering material that lived up to the early chapter. Seven years after Ellen's death, Homes unpacks the poor woman's personal effects, and when this doesn't lead her to deeper understanding, she falls back on fiction and imagines Ellen's love affair with her father. A friend rightly objects, "You're making it up." To which the author lamely responds, "The only other option is for someone to tell me how it was, what really happened." Actually, there were alternatives. If she was contractually obligated to produce a book, she might have made a more determined effort to track down sources who could tell her "what really happened." Instead, like a diligent grad student or an amateur genealogist, she turns from people to paper, from dramatic scenes to a computer screen, from factual research to endless Googling. And in the process her memoir disperses into a pattern of unconnected dots, like a newspaper photograph held too close to the eye.Near the end, it appears that she'll sue Norman and through legal discovery obtain not just a copy of her DNA test, but vital family information that she -- and the reader -- yearns for. Meticulously, she sets down 15 pages of questions for a possible deposition, but then never supplies a single answer, never explains what became of the dispute. Closing with another unsatisfying digression, this one about her adoptive grandmother and her own daughter, she makes a reader wonder whether she might have been wiser to leave things as they stood with the appearance of that

excellent piece in the New Yorker.