



The Territory of Men: A Memoir

Joelle Fraser

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Born into the turmoil of mid-sixties San Francisco, the daughter of a flower child and a surfer, Joelle Fraser grew up with no bedtime, no boundaries, and no father. But “dads” she had in abundance, as her mother worked her way through boyfriends and husbands, caught between the traditional rules of her upbringing and the new freedoms of the “me generation” and women’s lib. Moving every few months, from houseboats and beach shacks to run-down apartments, Joelle came to learn that a woman’s life, free or not, is played out on men’s territory.

Set in northern California, Hawaii, and the small coastal towns of Oregon, Fraser’s engrossing memoir captures this centerless childhood in wonderfully vivid, frank writing, then goes on to show how a legacy like this affects a girl as she grows up. Pretty, blond, precociously aware of her own sexuality, Joelle was drawn to men early, eager to unlock their mysteries. Working in bars, prisons, and firing ranges, she liked to hang out where they congregated. To her the only worlds that counted were men’s worlds. Men held the power; they made life matter.

Fraser’s sharp vignettes of her intense relationships, brief, turbulent marriage, and itinerant life are haunting echoes of her early memories. In *The Territory of Men*, she brilliantly portrays the way a rootless childhood leads to a restless adulthood, and how a mother’s aimless life serves as a blueprint for her daughter.

From the Hardcover edition.

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