The Invisibles: A Tale of the Eunuchs of India

By Jaffrey, Zia

Vintage, 1998. Book Condition: New. Brand New, Unread Copy in Perfect Condition. A+ Customer Service! Summary: In this superb work of investigative reporting, Zia Jaffrey pursues the riddle of India's most elusive subculture, the cross-dressing and often-castrated figures known as "hijras" whose very name means neither male nor female. Are the hijras lucky or dangerous? Are they a nurturing community of outcasts or a criminal network thatkidnaps and mutilates recruits? Do they number in the thousands or in the millions? As she talks with policemen, a unionizer of eunuchs, and with the hijras themselves, Jaffrey unravels veils of rumor and deception to locate the nature of our sexual and social thresholds, and the people who dwell on them. Deeply resonant, uniquely insightful, The Invisibles is an enthralling work. "A magnificent journey. Jaffrey writes about this fascinating and delicate subject with human understanding and warmth."--Ryszard Kapuscinski "Sensitively written. Eloquent. And compassionate."--New York Times Book Review.

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Eunuchs have long occupied distinctive roles in Indian society. Among Hindus, they hold low status and generally survive from the money given them at the time of marriages or births in Hindu families. Within Muslim society, they served historically as special guards of women's quarters and often held high administrative positions. In this fascinating book, Jaffrey, an American freelance writer who spent part of her childhood in India, presents her investigation of eunuchs, or hijras, in Delhi and Hyderabad, interviewing them and describing the reactions of her Indian hosts to them. I was very interested when I heard the subject of this book. The eunuchs of India is a subject that very little has been written about. This book promised to tell about this “invisible” group.