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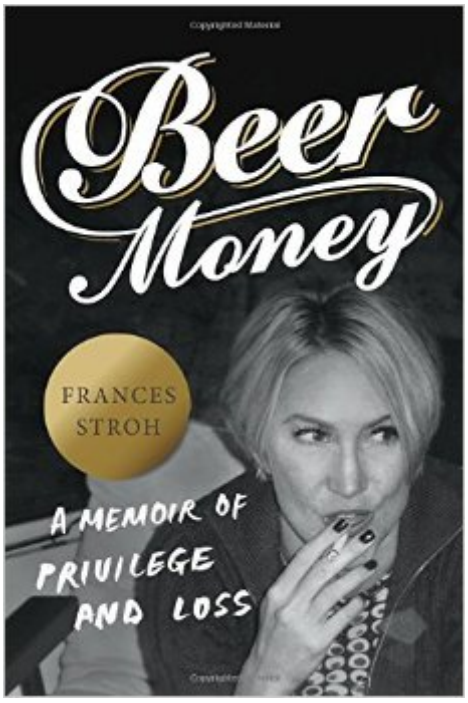
Beer Money: A Memoir Of Privilege And Loss



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Synopsis

In the tradition of Rich Cohenâ ™sÂ Sweet and LowÂ and Sean Wilseyâ ™sÂ Oh the Glory of it All,Â a memoir of a city, an industry, and a dynasty in decline, and the story of a young artistâ ™s struggle to find her way out of the ruins.Frances Strohâ ™s earliest memories are ones of great privilege: shopping trips to London and New York, lunches served by black-tied waiters at the Regency Hotel, and a house filled with precious antiques, which she was forbidden to touch. Established in Detroit in 1850, by 1984 the Stroh Brewing Company had become the largest private beer fortune in America and a brand emblematic of the American dream itself; while Stroh was coming of age, the Stroh family fortune was estimated to be worth $700 million.But behind the beautiful faÃ§ade lay a crumbling foundation. Detroitâ ™s economy collapsed with the retreat of the automotive industry to the suburbs and abroad and likewise the Stroh family found their wealth and legacy disappearing. As their fortune dissolved in little over a decade, the family was torn apart internally by divorce and one family member's drug bust; disagreements over the management of the business; and disputes over the remaining money they possessed. Even as they turned against one another, looking for a scapegoat on whom to blame the unraveling of their family, they could not anticipate that even far greater tragedy lay in store.Featuring beautiful evocative photos throughout, Strohâ ™s memoir is elegantly spare in structure and mercilessly clear-eyed in its self-appraisalâ ”at once a universally relatable family drama and a great American story.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Even when Frances Stroh was a child, the fair haired only daughter of one of the Detroit based Stroh Beer Company's heirs, even as, as a seven-year-old, she was taken to lunch at the Regency Hotel and shopping at FAO Schwartz, she had a sense of the shaky underpinnings of her family's wealth. Her father was an executive in the family business, to be sure, but not the man in charge or the wealthiest in his family. Yet, while on business trips to New York, he spent untold thousands of dollars on rare and costly antiques for his "collections," of which there were many, drank heavily, eventually to the point of deep alcoholism, and had a fiery, mercurial temperament that was most often directed at two of his three sons. Life in their somewhat modest Grosse Pointe home was tense at best, given Eric Stroh's explosiveness and Gail Stroh's frugality and remoteness. Like many of the "poor little rich kids" in her home town, Frances started escaping from her family through drugs and alcohol early on. For her, fortunately, substance use and abuse was a phase she passed through as she became serious about her career as an artist. Her favorite brother, Charlie, however, was not so fortunate -- his escape into drugs led to addiction and drug dealing that lasted his entire life, alienating everyone in his family except his "Princess," Frances.Frances Stroh depicts the recurring trauma and tension in her family with sensitivity but emotional clarity, She takes the same clear-eyed approach to her family business, which, in a series of acquisitions and expansions in the 1980s, became the third largest beer company in the US, after only Miller and Anheuser Busch.

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