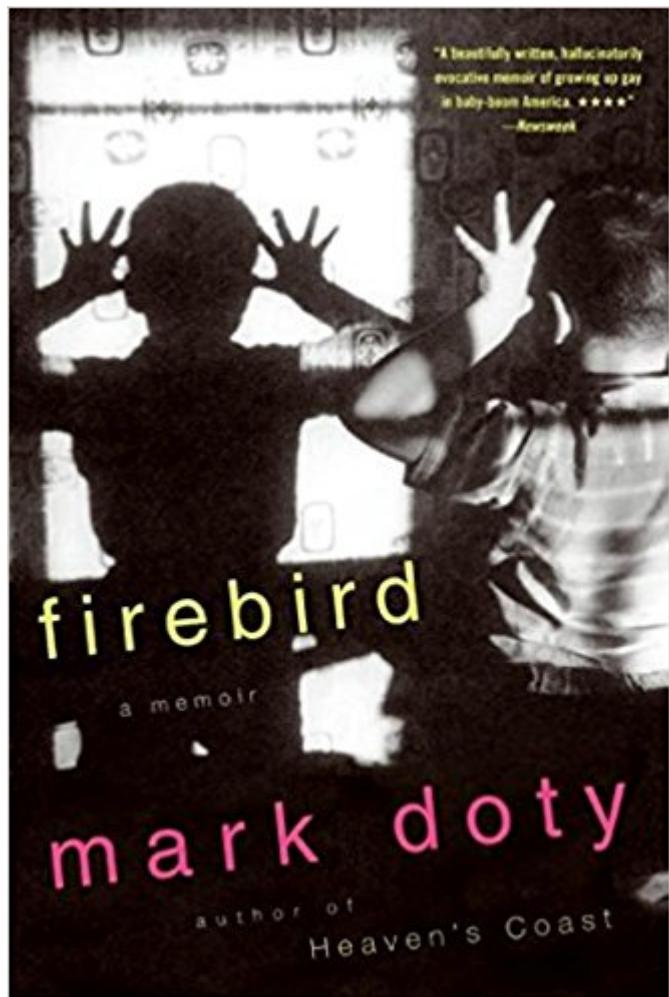


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Firebird: A Memoir



Synopsis

In *Firebird*, Mark Doty tells the story of a ten-year-old in a top hat, cane, and red chiffon scarf, interrupted while belting out Judy Garland's "Get Happy" by his alarmed mother at the bedroom door, exclaiming, "Son, you're a boy!" *Firebird* presents us with a heroic little boy who has quite enough worries without discovering that his dawning sexuality is the Wrong One. A self-confessed "chubby smart bookish sissy with glasses and a Southern accent," Doty grew up on the move, the family following his father's engineering work across America—from Tennessee to Arizona, Florida to California. A lyrical, heartbreaking comedy of one family's dissolution through the corrosive powers of alcohol, sorrow, and thwarted desire, *Firebird* is also a wry evocation of childhood's pleasures and terrors, a comic tour of American suburban life, and a testament to the transformative power of art.

Book Information

Paperback: 224 pages

Publisher: Harper Perennial; Reprint edition (September 19, 2000)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0060931973

ISBN-13: 978-0060931971

Product Dimensions: 5.3 x 0.5 x 8 inches

Shipping Weight: 7 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.6 out of 5 stars See all reviews (19 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #313,961 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #21 in Books > Biographies & Memoirs > Specific Groups > LGBT > Gay #182 in Books > Biographies & Memoirs > Regional U.S. > South #461 in Books > Politics & Social Sciences > Social Sciences > Specific Demographics > Gay & Lesbian

Customer Reviews

To the ostracized, Mark Doty's "Firebird" is testament. To insiders, the frank and moving memoir of growing up gay in '50-60's America, is a lens into which a casual gaze will stun. Looking deeper, few readers will come away from "Firebird" without recognizing themselves. Fewer still will leave Doty's life story without empathy. This is the book's chief victory; while the memoir may be a personal account of a young gay man's salvation, it is a story few would find utterly foreign. Self-discovery, after all, is solitary and often pits the inner polliwog against the larger, and often shifting, societal/peer context. The gay boy; the geek; the punk with the Mohawk; the girl with the

braces all belong to the same childhood tribe. En masse, outsiders separate themselves through the discovery of what, ultimately, comforts them and affords them a place in this world-and where they find others just like them. Our young "Firebird" misfit finds beauty, a place to belong, within art. First he comes to love dancing and music; later he finds solace in painting and finally, poetry (on the urging of poet Richard Shelton to whom we poetry-lovers owe a huge debt of gratitude). Through it all, the emerging Doty, the evolving gay boy, is most at home in art, not in the rule-bound world of little boys. "Most boys...who seem already possessed of forms of knowledge opaque to me, things they grasp...I do not." When Mark's mother finds him performing playful drag for a friend, "She says, with a hiss, with shame and with exasperation, Son, you're a boy." No, he is a "queer" boy—"simultaneously debased and elevated.

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