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The Leopard Hat by Valerie Steiker

[The Leopard Hat](#) A Daughter's Story **Written by Valerie Steiker** eBook, 336 pages | Vintage | Biography & Autobiography - Personal Memoirs | **\$13.00** | 978-0-307-42890-5 (0-307-42890-7)

This indelible story of a mother and daughter opens with a magical childhood on the Upper East Side of New York. At its heart is Valerie Steiker's mother, Gisèle, a Belgian Jew who, as a child, was hidden from the Nazis during World War II. As an adult, Gisèle developed a large appetite for joy, beauty, and spontaneity, tempered only by her old-world superstitions and protectiveness. The apartment on Madison Avenue where she and her husband raised two daughters overflowed with books, musical instruments, velvet-lined boxes, Gisèle's flamboyant wardrobe, and, above all, love and warmth.

When Gisèle died during her daughter's junior year at Harvard, Steiker's challenge was to preserve the enveloping glow of her mother's presence even as she stepped outside of it. With grace and humor, she explores her girlhood and adolescence and the crucial growing pains of her twenties. She falls in love; she moves to Paris for a year on her own; she returns home to find her mother still absent. Layering episodes in her own life with those of her mother's, she often sees Gisèle illuminated in her own experiences.

The Leopard Hat is an intimate account of loss and reconciliation, and of the unshakable bond between a mother and daughter; it is, finally, the celebration of a young woman's vivacious emergence into adulthood.

From the Hardcover edition.

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The Leopard Hat by Valerie Steiker

[The Leopard Hat](#) A Daughter's Story Written by [Valerie Steiker](#) Trade Paperback, 336 pages | Vintage | Biography & Autobiography - Personal Memoirs | **\$13.00** | 978-0-375-72620-0 (0-375-72620-9)

In this tender loving memoir, Valerie Steiker evokes a magical childhood on the Upper East side of New York with a woman whose own losses led her to delight in family, beauty and life itself.

Valerie Steiker's Belgian Jewish mother, Gisèle-who, as a child in Antwerp, was hidden from the Nazis-wasn't a typical American mom. She spoke with throaty Belgian Rs and wore only high heels. Before her marriage, she had studied acting with Lee Strasburg and been a model in Mexico. With her vitality and elegance, she created a joyous childhood for Valerie and her sister. Together they tangoed through their vibrant Manhattan apartment, took in great art, and shared "women's hidden secrets." Gisèle's premature death left Valerie (at the time a junior at Harvard) unmoored, but in grieving and in finding her own path to womanhood, Valerie would ultimately grow to understand Gisèle more profoundly than she ever had as a child. Beautifully evocative of a glamorous and now-vanished world, **The Leopard Hat** is an extraordinary memoir about the warm and indelible bond between mother and daughter.

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