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 that kidnaps 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 "Sensitive written. eloquent. and compassionate."--New York Times Book Review.

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Indians feel so uncomfortable around them, they offer large sums of money so they leave. "Nobody would like to be cursed with 'may your son be a hijra,'" says Kavi of the Humsafar Trust. Even Western banks in India have called on their services to humiliate clients in default, local media reports say. Khan once tried to contest a civic election, but as is the fate of eunuchs in India, she was denied eligibility. As a power cut plunged the room in darkness, Khan said she wanted an acknowledgment that eunuchs exist, so they can get a house, medical attention, go to school. In her next life she wants to be reincarnated as a "normal human being," a policeman in fact, with the power to stop bad things from happening. Ix, 293 pages : 22 cm. In 1984, Zia Jaffrey traveled to Delhi, and there glimpsed a group of cross-dressing men who had walked, uninvited and unannounced, into a wedding. They sang out of tune, hurled insults at the guests, and were finally paid to leave. She learned that these often-castrated, elusive figures were known as the hijras - "neither male nor female"--Or the eunuchs, of India. They existed in thousands in every major city, were tolerated yet reviled, thought to bring good luck to newlyweds and newborns, yet also called extortionists and kidnappers. Jaffrey set off on a jo