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Moonshiner's Daughter

Mary Judith Messer



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Moonshiner's Daughter, by Mary Judith Messer, is the early life story of a young girl raised in some of the most remote, backwoods parts of Haywood County, North Carolina, deep in the heart of the Great Smoky Mountains. Her father, an ardent moonshiner when he wasn't in prison, and her mother, often showing mental illness from an earlier brain injury, raised their four children in some of the grimmest circumstances that you will ever read about. Messer eventually escaped her extreme living conditions by going to live with a family as their mother's helper outside of Washington, DC. She then moved to New York City to join her oldest sister who had fled an abusive arranged marriage when she was fifteen and left behind a young son. These two teenage girls, uneducated but determined, found freedom from their Appalachian abuse yet encountered a culture and some inhabitants who provided scars even so. Messer's memoir is told through the eyes and with the words of a barely educated child and young woman yet their meaning and her descriptions are clear as a mountain stream. Messer changed the names of many people and places she wrote about to protect her still living family members and herself as well. In the final chapter, Messer shares one legacy from her father....he even taught the infamous "Popcorn" Sutton of Maggie Valley how to be a moonshiner when Popcorn was a teenager. The moonshiner's daughter did survive and ultimately thrive. This is her story. You won't be able to put it down.

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