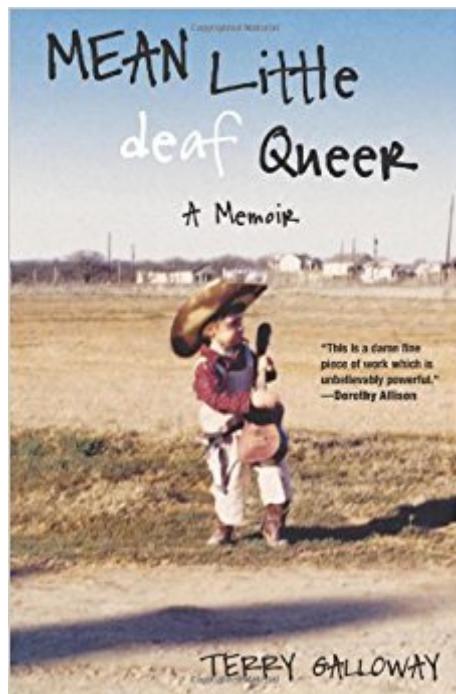


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Mean Little Deaf Queer: A Memoir



Synopsis

In 1959, the year Terry Galloway turned nine, the voices of everyone she loved began to disappear. No one yet knew that an experimental antibiotic given to her mother had wreaked havoc on her fetal nervous system, eventually causing her to go deaf. As a self-proclaimed "child freak," she acted out her fury with her boxy hearing aids and Coke-bottle glasses by faking her own drowning at a camp for crippled children. Ever since that first real-life performance, Galloway has used theater, whether onstage or off, to defy and transcend her reality. With disarming candor, she writes about her mental breakdowns, her queer identity, and living in a silent, quirky world populated by unforgettable characters. What could have been a bitter litany of complaint is instead an unexpectedly hilarious and affecting take on life. From the Trade Paperback edition.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This is a damn fine piece of work which is unbelievably powerful. "Dorothy Allison" This is not your mother's triumph-of-the-human-spirit memoir. Yes, Terry Galloway is resilient. But she's also caustic, depraved, utterly disinhibited, and somehow sweetly bubbly, a beguiling raconteuse who periodically leaps onto the dinner table and stabs you with her fork. Her story will fascinate, it will hurt, and you will like it." Alison Bechdel, author of *Fun Home* "The most uncomfortable laughter of the season." "Out" One of the finest, most nakedly honest and humorous autobiographies out there to be read. . . . Partly David Sedaris-esque in its slice-of-life essay moments, part slapstick farce, so very real, and always laugh out loud hilarious." Rebecca Sarwate, *Edge* "[A] humorous

and harrowing new memoir." "The Advocate" Told with understandable rage, quirky humor, and extraordinary humanity, this remarkable woman's engaging account deserves a large readership." "Booklist" A frank, bitingly humorous memoir." "Kirkus Reviews" [Galloway] is dexterous in her use of words and devastating with a sense of black humor that brings numerous laugh-out-loud delights." "John R. Killacky, *The Gay and Lesbian Review*" Galloway was born a storyteller, and her narrative gifts are in full force throughout, spinning yarns about herself and her family that mesmerize." "Robert Faires, *Austin Chronicle* From the Trade Paperback edition.

Terry Galloway is the founder of the Actual Lives writing and performance programs; a founding member of Estherâ™s Follies, Austin, Texasâ™s legendary cabaret; and cofounder of the Mickee Faust Club in Tallahassee, Florida. She divides her time between Austin and Tallahassee. From the Trade Paperback edition.

Over the past decade I've read numerous memoirs by writers from the LGBT community, most notably by Dan Savage, Alison Bechdel and Augusten Burroughs. Obviously, some are more successful than others communicating their life's trials and tribulations. Terry Galloway's *Mean Little Deaf Queer* is successful for a myriad of reasons, the most pronounced being her ferocious wit and an ability to write well, as well as engagingly. As a founder (and most visible cast member) of Mickee Faust Club, a local theatrical troupe, she has become a bona fide Tallahassee celebrity [a claim she humbly denies]. Galloway is, for all intents and purposes, deaf. This has left her handicapped, but by no means disabled. Yes, she tells some horror stories. However, it is her triumphs over her adversities that resound throughout this inspiring volume. She is, as we all are, a truly unique individual. Her stories of gradually losing her hearing at age 9, coming to terms with her burgeoning sexuality, dealing with bigotry and humiliations both oblivious and intentional are told in language which allows her readers to recognize, appreciate and empathize; some may even see their complicity in society's crime of marginalizing minorities. The chapters in this book which affected me most profoundly were those dealing with her family. There is a scene of her mother singing while ironing her husband's clothes, a private moment of reverie and connubial affirmation the author captures with exquisite sensitivity. Her father's deathbed scene, the miracle of the ponds, and outpouring of love by his wife and daughters had me reading through tears. There are many stories depicted in these pages; some hard to take, others dark and humorous. The lady tells a story of being locked up in a NYC mental ward that is wickedly funny; an inspired scene of comic hijinks and merriment worthy of "One Flew over the Cuckoo's Nest," complete with an evil (Ronald

Reagan loving) head nurse. With "Mean Little deaf Queer" Galloway proves adept at releasing her life's stories with clarity and humor; she is a literary Whirling Dervish, spinning her yarns without distraction, leaving her readers conquered but not at all dizzy.

Mean Little deaf Queer is remarkable -- this memoir transmutes Terry Galloway's unique, quirky, anguished, sometimes goofy but nevertheless powerful individual narrative into a larger exploration of the way we tell stories to ourselves and to others in order to construct our places in the world. Terry as a child experienced moments when she was transported out of her body -- later, she engaged in an elaborate exploration of how to transport herself back into her body, to live in the world as the person she was. At the same time, in theater, she was transported again by the powers of drama and comedy. (There is a passage about performance of Shakespeare in a barn in Texas that magnificently captures such a moment.) The reader will be transported as well. A word about the prose: Many people who are familiar with Galloway's work in theater, even work that she herself has authored or co-authored, think of her primarily as a performer. Here you get to experience her as a pure writer, finding another channel through which to link her life and wisdom to ours. Her writing is itself a performance -- a high-wire act in which the challenge is not to fall into self-absorbed sentiment on the one side or the glib, easy laugh on the other. Galloway meets that challenge and exceeds it in a way that, again and again, will take your breath away. Her writing is lyrical, precise, and relentlessly expressive. I've known Terry for about 30 years, so this isn't an objective review. But it is a fair one, because I wouldn't praise a book -- even a friend's book -- unless I thought it deserved praise. Mean Little deaf Queer deserves very high praise indeed.

Great book. Wonderful author. Terry Galloway sheds light on a subject that is not oft discussed with humor, tenderness, and tenacity. Galloway's "ethic of inclusion and adaptation" is a clarion call for those of who work with the public and often make assumptions about what people with different disabilities can -- and cannot -- do.

Initially, I was baffled by a new bunch of memoirs by 80s and 90s performance artists like Tim Miller and Karen Finley -- I sort of thought, "why write a book when you have already been telling these stories with your body, live, in front of a real audience?" Terry Galloway reminds us that at the center of all of this are the stories. Though I missed the possibility of seeing her tell these stories live onstage, I never could have gotten so many, so densely layered, so strongly felt, so mysterious, so ridiculous, so important, in one performance. Galloway talks repeatedly about being a flirt and a

charmer, and by the end of the book, you realized she's charmed the pants right off of the reader, without even the benefit of eye contact and physical contact, with only her stories...MLdQ is a wonderful book, steeped in stories told the old fashioned way by someone who happened to be on the cutting edge of live storytelling through performance.

As a friend of Terry's for several decades now, I was surprised about the new things I learned about her when I read her memoir. But more than that I was pleased with the real insight it gave me into another human being, and a disabled one at that. Terry bares her soul, and it's one worth gazing at.

I've known Terry for a long time and consider her a close friend. So, when I began to read this book, I was sure to like it. However, I had no idea it would affect me the way that it has. I laughed out loud at her depictions, characterizations, and descriptions of her acquaintances, friends, lovers, colleagues, family..... The book invited me right in, took ahold, and completely entertained and made me think for a couple of days. This is a book about all our lives, insecurities, triumphs, failures, questions, and wonderings. This is a life-affirming, shattering, tour de force of a memoir. I recommend it to anyone who likes to read and has any interest in our shared humanity.

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