



The Life and Many Deaths of Harry Houdini

Ruth Brandon

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For many performers, stage life and real life are separate identities. For master illusionist Harry Houdini, the two were inextricably linked. In this widely acclaimed biography, Ruth Brandon shows how Houdini's obsession with his own mortality drove him to create death-defying stunts that not only captivated the public but also subdued his own raging psychological demons.

As Brandon relates Houdini's methods of escape, she asks: What was he trying to escape from? Her exploration of the psychic landscape of one of the most enduringly famous performers of the twentieth century makes for utterly fascinating reading. Brandon reveals much that is new: how Houdini invented a phantom son; why he wrote long daily letters to his wife, Bess, who lived one foot below him; his combative relations with mediums and spiritualists, including Arthur Conan Doyle; and the first full description of his fabled death. This definitive biography allows readers to peer into Houdini's psyche and understand him more deeply than ever before.

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