Misfortune: A Novel

by Wesley Stace



About the Book

A rich, outrageous, Dickensian novel in the comic tradition of **The Crimson Petal and the White** about a boy raised as a girl in the richest home in 19th century England.

Lord Geoffroy Loveall arrives home one fateful morning with a most unusual package--he?s found an abandoned baby, whom he adopts and names Rose in honor of his long-dead sister. Rose?s childhood inside the sprawling maze of towers, lawns, and halls that make up Love Hall is an endless round of privilege and delight.

There is only one problem: Rose?s father wanted a daughter, but he brought home a son. When Rose reaches adolescence, Lord Loveall?s delusion becomes apparent to all, and her parents can no longer disguise the secret around which they?ve created Rose?s entire world: this delicate flower is, in fact, a boy. Outraged relatives descend to fight for their inheritance, the idyll collapses, and Rose must journey halfway around the world to find his true self and reclaim his rightful place.

A joy-filled and mischievous reinvention of the English adventure novel, **Misfortune** brims with unexpected plot twists, outrageous characters, and fanciful details of a world long past. The voice of Rose comes alive with irresistible, ravishing vitality--all the more remarkable for being the work of a first-time writer. **Misfortune** is an astonishingly original and absolutely unforgettable debut.

Discussion Guide

1. Could the events narrated in **Misfortune** happen in the present day? The world described in the novel is an exaggerated one, but would it have been any easier to bring a boy up as a girl in the nineteenth century than it would be now?

2. Are Geoffroy and Anonyma sympathetic characters? Could/should they be?

3. ?The message of the book is the radical notion that we should empathize with others, however odd, and that this would make the world a better place.? (This statement is drawn from Monica Kendrick?s review of **Misfortune** in the April 8, 2005, issue of the *Chicago Reader*.) Do you agree? What might our world look like, in that case?

4. Of what other works does **Misfortune** remind you? How do you react to the mixing of postmodern devices, contemporary mores, and Dickensian style that characterizes this novel?

5. While Rose?s experience of adolescence could not be called typical, **Misfortune** makes much of self-discovery and the glory of a person coming into her own. In what ways is this story familiar? What observations does this novel make about adolescence, and about self-realization?

6. particular writer is referenced in the name of the second section: I Am Reborn. Who is this and why?

7. How would **Misfortune** be different if it weren?t, in part, a rags-toriches story? In what ways would the drama of the story change?

8. How did you react to **Misfortune?s** full-circle ending?

Author Bio

Wesley Stace is the author of three widely acclaimed novels: the internationally bestselling MISFORTUNE, selected by the *Washington Post* and Amazon as one of the best novels of the year; BY GEORGE, one of the New York Public Library?s 2007 Books To Remember; and CHARLES JESSOLD, CONSIDERED AS A MURDERER, one of the *Wall Street Journal*?s best fiction books of 2011. He has also recorded under the name John Wesley Harding, though his recent album, *Self-Titled* (September 2013), was the first released under his own name. He is the founder of the Cabinet of Wonders variety show, contributes frequently to *The New York Times*, teaches at Princeton, and lives in Philadelphia.

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