



# My Father Before Me: A Memoir

*Chris Forhan*

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## **My Father Before Me: A Memoir** Chris Forhan

An award-winning poet offers a multi-generational portrait of an American family—weaving together the lives of his ancestors, his parents, and his own coming of age in the 60s and 70s in the wake of his father's suicide, in this superbly written, "fiercely honest" (Nick Flynn) memoir.

The fifth of eight children, Chris Forhan was born into a family of silence. He and his siblings learned, without being told, that certain thoughts and feelings were not to be shared. On the evenings his father didn't come home, the rest of the family would eat dinner without him, his whereabouts unknown, his absence pronounced but not mentioned. And on a cold night in 1973, just before Christmas, Forhan's father killed himself in the carport.

Forty years later, Forhan "bravely considers the way he is and is not his father's son" (Larry Watson), digging into his family's past and finding within each generation the same abandonment, loss, and silence in which he was raised. Like Ian Frazier in *Family* or Frank McCourt in *Angela's Ashes*, Forhan shows his family members as both a part and a product of their time. *My Father Before Me* is a family history, an investigation into a death, and a stirring portrait of growing up in an Irish Catholic childhood, all set against a backdrop of America from the Great Depression to the Ramones.

Marrying the literary scope of memoirists Geoffrey Wolff and J.R. Moehringer with the intensity of family novels like *The Corrections* and *We Are Not Ourselves*, *My Father Before Me* is the kind of epic, immersive memoir that comes along once in a decade.

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