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Wishful Drinking

Carrie Fisher (Simon & Shuster; 163 Pgs.; \$21)

By DIANE GARRETT

Carrie Fisher can't stop writing or talking about her life, but who can really blame her? With stories like these, there's no need for her to hide behind fiction any more. "Wishful Drinking" began as a stage show, and certain zingers have a polished Borscht Belt ring, while other passages are incredibly poetic; Fisher writes movingly about what it's like to be born into celebrity and never really leave. At the very least, her memoir lays waste to the tabazine conceit that stars are "just like us."

Fisher was just a toddler when her father left her mom (Eddie Fisher and Debbie Reynolds to you and me) for recently widowed Elizabeth Taylor in a scandal she likens to Brad Pitt's abandonment of Jennifer Aniston for Angelina Jolie. Her parents moved on to a series of romantic partners, which Fisher hilariously diagrams in a chart she dubs Hollywood 101.

Dad was mostly absent during her childhood, leaving the parenting of Fisher and her brother Todd to Reynolds, who was fairly relaxed about it: She brought home pot for the two of them to experiment with, and later induced Cary Grant to advise Fisher about the dangers of ingesting LSD. (Dad similarly beseeched Grant, who once again gallantly rang Fisher up.) One Christmas, she gave Fisher and her grandmother vibrators.

But it's not all zaniness: Fisher writes elegiacally about growing up with a famous mother. When she was away, Fisher and her brother would play dress-up and "inhale the powdery, flowery scent of her." And when she was home, Fisher would sleep on the rug next to

Reynolds' bed, just to be near her, with her brother on the couch close by.

Fisher became a celebrity herself through "Star Wars" and married Paul Simon in her 20s, but the union was short lived. She takes special delight jabbing at Simon in "Wishful Drinking," but even she will admit their fights could be amusing: During a quarrel on their honeymoon, for example, Fisher spat out: "Not only do I not like you, I don't like you personally!" They laughed then, but later when she told him he would be sorry if the plane she was about to board crashed, he shrugged and said, "Maybe not."

Her liaison with Bryan Lourd was equally doomed: Fisher was struggling with addiction and Lourd left her for a man after their daughter Billie was born. The author, who can be compulsive in her joke telling, unleashes a torrent of one-liners about this turn of events when just a few would do, but at least they're not as barbed as some of salvos she directs at other men in her life.

She's equally unflinching about her struggles with addiction and mental illness, describing electroshock therapy in great detail and listing other famous folk who have undergone treatment for mental illness. But here again Fisher cannot resist the temptation to relentlessly crack wise, suggesting a Bipolar Pride Day with separate floats for the depressives and manics, and naming her good and bad moods.

At a certain point, the manic truth/joke telling becomes wearisome. Maybe one day Fisher will find a way to control that compulsion, too.

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