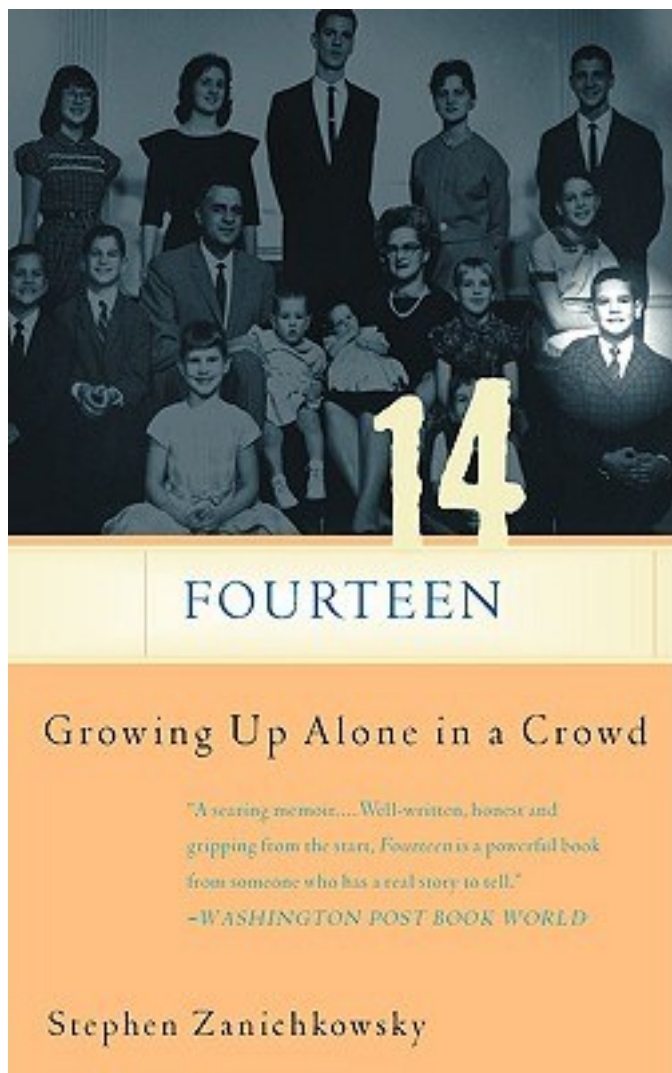


# Fourteen



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著者:Zanichkowsky, Stephen

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Born eighth in a family on its way to becoming almost twice that size, Stephen Zanichkowsky immediately learned that his life was not going to be easy. Instead, he and his siblings fended for themselves to avoid the wrath of their father and the heartbreaking emotional distance of their mother. Silence and terror ruled. A brother was taken away by the family one day, never to return. A sister was born with a mental deficiency that was never explained. As the years went by, each child left home as soon as he or she turned 18, creating unaccustomed "space" by skipping the others' weddings and graduations. Here, Zanichkowsky embarks on a journey back to the family's Lithuanian Catholic roots in Brooklyn and follows its members on a tortured climb to suburban comfort that, for him, culminates in his escape from home and the draft. Along the way, he seeks answers to lifelong questions: why was his father so angry and uncontrollable?; and why did his parents continue to have children when they didn't have enough love, patience, or money to spread around? Forty years later after leaving home, Zanichkowsky reaches out to his siblings - most of them divorced or living alone - and discovers a group of people still learning how to form relationships with others. In the process, the boy that once retreated into his own world emerges, whole and self-possessed.

作者介绍:

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