



The Rise and Fall of the House of Barneys: A Family Tale of Chutzpah, Glory, and Greed

Joshua Levine

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This is a rags to riches to rags story.

It took three generations to build Barneys into the world's most fabulous clothing store--and less than a decade to tear it down. This fascinating book is at once a family saga, a cautionary business tale, and a riveting, superbly detailed behind-the-scenes account of how a secondhand store founded on pluck and chutzpah grew into a glittering international retail empire, only to founder on greed and hubris.

It is a tragicomedy of truly Greek proportions, featuring a full cast of larger-than-life heroes and villains and fools, spun in dramatic, novelistic style, and written in evocative prose by a distinguished editor at *Forbes*. Patriarch Barney Pressman started small in 1923, but within two decades he was selling more suits than anyone in the world. By the time his son, Fred, took over in the 1960s, Barneys was a thriving institution, and Boys Town at Barneys was the site of every New York boy's clothing rite of passage. But Fred had loftier ambitions; he was never comfortable with the crass discount image. He staked the family fortune on European fabrics and design, wound up transforming the entire world of men's fashion, and made a killing along the way.

But it was Fred's sons, Gene and Bob, who really wanted it all--not just a store but a grandiose temple of ultimate chic. Instead, through extravagance, flamboyance, greed, and an arrogant disregard for sound business principles, they raced heedlessly into one of the most spectacular business flameouts in retail history.

A tasty mix of high fashion, high finance, and overweening family ambition, *The Rise and Fall of the House of Barneys* is a book every bit as stylish and well tailored as any suit the Pressman dynasty ever sold.

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