

Essays *from*

Dysfunctional Families

• **DEAN K. BRENT**

Essays from Dysfunctional Families[©]

Dean K. Brent

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When I was ten years old my oldest brother who was seventeen introduced me to sex. We were alone at home and he was watching a porn video he had gotten from a friend of his. He was watching a scene of a woman performing fellatio on a man. He then asked me if I knew what that felt like and I answered no. He then got us both naked and that day was my first sexual experience. After that day I was sexually active with my brother at least once a week until I was about seventeen. Once he went off to college the only time I was with him is when he came home for spring, winter, and summer break. When I was eleven my other brother who was fourteen started having sex with me and there were times when we had threesomes. Many times. It became natural and I began to look forward to it. The only reason why I began to enjoy it was because I was told to. When I told my dad what was going on I was about twelve years old. My father simply said, just sit back and

enjoy the pleasure of it, because it won't last long. I was shocked by his response, but thought it was okay being that my father said it. Although I was cleared by my father there was still a part of me that knew it was wrong so I never shared what was going on with anyone in my family or my friends. I wanted to tell my mother, but she was never sober or home enough for me to tell her. I was seventeen when the sex ended with my oldest brother and nineteen when the sex ended with my other brother. The thing that makes me the angriest is when we get together. I am now thirty and any time we get together I feel like I went through the pain alone. Both my brothers are married with children and I cannot understand how they could just get married and have children as if none of this ever happened. I do everything I can to not see them because there is a part of me that wants to molest my brother's children as revenge. I believe my father thinks what we did was okay because we were children.

My mother doesn't even have a clue what happened. Every time I look at my brothers I stare them in the eyes, but they look away. I think they are too ashamed and fearful to talk about it. I guess they feel if you don't talk about it then you don't have to deal with it, but I cannot live another day pretending this never happened. I have been to counsel and it seems to help, but until my family can face facts I think it might be best to never see them again. I try my best to forgive my mother because I blame her the most. I feel like if she would have been sober enough she could have saved me.

Dianna U.

Eddyville, Oregon

My grandmother felt really bad as she was dying. I thought it was just physical pain, but it was more guilt and shame pain then physical. I went to visit her in the hospital and she told me she was holding on to some truth that she could not hold on to any longer. I was confused as she began to talk only because I didn't know if she or the meds were talking. She said the family had a dark and dirty secret, but she said I had every right to know the truth. She then said everyone should know who their real father is. She said every one should have the right to know. She began to talk about why she never agreed with artificial insemination and that it was of the devil. She said every child should know where they come from and that should never be a secret.

I wasn't sure where she was going with it, but she soon fell a sleep and all she got out was your father is not your daddy he is just a good man who did what was right. She never regained consciousness and about a week later we had her funeral. I didn't tell anyone about what happened, but I couldn't shake what she said off of me. I had to know what she was talking about. I had to know what she was trying to tell me. I secretly tried to find out for myself who my father was, but all the papers and documents had my **father's name on it**; the man who my grandmother said is not my father. I then got the idea to hire a private detective, but I knew I didn't have the cash for that. It was about two months later that I finally got the courage to come clean and approach my mother. I told her what my grandmother told me and I could tell that my grandmother was not making anything up. Just by the response my mother made with her face and body told me that the man I had thought was my father is not.

She told me that she couldn't tell me just yet and that I had to wait until she was ready. She then told me not to ask my father. Three more months went by and I continued my life as if the previous events never happened. I tried my best to forget about it, but it just would not leave me alone. I then decided to dishonor my promise and ask my father. I approached him and had this knowing feeling that he would indeed tell me.

In 1990 my mother's brother was sent to Persian Gulf to fight in the war. He returned before it was over due to him being identified as AWOL. They said he went mentally crazy after witnessing his partner die in a shoot out along with killing a child not realizing he was a kid. When he returned home he was incoherent and did not know who he was. My mother took him in because she felt obligated being that he was her brother. The doctors told her he belonged in a mental ward, but my mother would not admit him to one. To make a long story short after my mother was raped by her brother she sent him to a mental hospital and nine months later I was born. My known father at the time was my mom's boyfriend. He assumed the position of dad and about two years later they married. They all agreed NEVER to tell me the truth, but I guess the guilt was eating my grandmother alive. My real father does not know I exist. He is doing much better, but still lives in the mental

hospital. It's crazy because now that I know the truth I personally wish my grandmother never said anything. This is one piece of truth I'd rather not know.

When I was born I was considered a “mistake.” My mother was the mistress of a man who was said to be divorcing. I was originally supposed to be aborted, but my mother couldn’t do it. After being born my father although he had a wife and family (four children) he raised me just as well. Everything I know about me and the incident is from many nights and days of overhearing conversations.

When Literary I was five, my father divorced his wife and left his family to live with his mother. He still provided for his children and former wife and even visited them. He basically lived with two families and did so as if it was the norm; for whatever reason we continued to live as such and never really talked about the wrong in the situation. Not only us, but our relatives who guessed were too afraid and ashamed to bring up the situation never talked about the fact that my father had two wives and father children from both. It was kind of like a Mormon family, however, we weren’t Mormons. Growing up I did see my siblings, but it was clear that they didn’t want to have anything to do with me. Their small gestures and comments always kept me unwanted and only got along with them do to my mother’s wishes. When I was about 10 or 11 years old according to the suicide letter I was the reason my siblings’ mother killed herself. The family was never the same. Oh,

LITERARY

BETRAYAL

As I grew older I began to hate Betrayal myself even more and wanted to die. I never wanted (I don’t think anyone does) to be the object of everyone’s anger and bitterness. I never had any control over how I was born and do not understand why I was born. Once I went to college I never went to another family function.

Casey Bell

Literary Betrayal©

Casey S. Bell

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“Did the lawsuit have anything to do with you not wanting to come back?”

“Oh, Shelly, you sure know how to ask the right questions.”

“I’m sorry. Was that too much of a tough question?”

“No, I’m just playing. No, the lawsuit had nothing to do with it.”

“Talk to us about the lawsuit. I mean we have heard everyone’s side of the story. I would like to hear yours?”

“Well, the man, Franklin Thompson, sued me for plagiarism.”

“Right, was it true though? Because as it ended you signed an agreement to pay him a certain amount of money.”

“Yeah, sorta, kinda. The essays in the book are all based on true events. The story of Kevin D was based on Franklin’s life. Frank thought that it was wrong that I used his life without his permission. In a sense he was right. That’s why I didn’t allow him to take me to court. I just paid him his dues and the publishers added his name to the credits in the book.”

“How did you meet Franklin?”

“I met him in school. We were roommates in college for two semesters. A lot of the things added in Kevin D’s story were fabricated, but the story itself was based on Franklin.”

“That’s fascinating. So, it’s been three years and where is the sophomore book?”

“I don’t know. I haven’t been able to think of anything that could follow the success of “Essays from Dysfunctional Families.” It really seems to be a great book not only in England and the United States, but in many other countries.”

“Let’s talk about that. The book was translated in over thirty languages, how did that make you feel?”

“It was amazing. I couldn’t believe it when I heard it myself. I just felt really blessed to know many people from different countries would be reading this book.”

“So how do you know whether or not they translated your book correctly?”

“Oh, I don’t know. It’s just a trust thing. I have to trust the translators did there job to the best of their ability.”

“So what was your sole purpose of even deciding to write this particular book?”

“Well, as I said I was mainly just trying to win a contest to get out of debt. But I also wanted to free people of thinking that there is such a thing as a perfect family. Many people always live thinking their family is the only family with dysfunctions. But I wanted to show lives of different people living in different places going through different situations in their life, but still all of them went through the same thing which is surviving a dysfunctional family.

Lots of times we think we are to blame for living in such messed up families, but we don't get to choose how we are born, but we do get to choose how we are going to grow from our situations and issues."

"Wow that is magnificent. If I be honest after reading this book I cried for days. It was about a month later that I went to my family and I confessed everything I was hiding and came clean before my parents."

"That's good. And that's what I wanted; people clearing themselves of their secrets."

"Amazing. So do you have any plans while you are in your home state?"

"Not really. Nothing spectacular."

"Nothing, really? Well, I hope you enjoy the next months being in the good ol' US of A. We want to thank Dean for coming on our show."

The audience cheers loudly. Dean responds.

“Thank you.”

“Coming up next on the Good Sunshine Show, have you been feeling pains in your body? Next up is Dr. Riley Bean. He will be telling us what those pains could be telling you about your health. Don’t go away.”

Kimberley turns off the television in dismay a little disappointed.

“He said nothing. I cannot believe he would come all this way and not even pay a visit.”

A disappointed silence is heard.

“He said nothing.”

Day 5 in New Mexico

Dean is standing by a shelf in a supermarket. He is holding a can of pickles and reading the back.

“Why do they have to put high fructose corn syrup in everything? I guess I have to get organic.”

As he stands there looking through the pickle brands a woman notices him. She tries to get a look at his face making sure he is who she believes he is. After some time she walks towards Dean.

“Excuse me.”

Dean looks at the woman and responds.

“Yes.”

After seeing him she shrieks. Dean responds.

“Ma’am, are you okay?”

“Oh my goodness, I cannot believe it is you. You are Dean Brent.”

“Yes, I am.”

She shrieks again.

“Oh my! Can I touch you?”

“Sure, I guess?”

She hesitantly touches him and then shrieks again. Dean just stands making faces that speak: this is a weird woman.

“Mr. Brent, let me just tell you I love your book. After reading it I brought a whole bunch of copies for my family, friends, and co-workers. I just had to share it with everyone. You do not know what you have done to me by writing that book.”

“Well, I am happy you enjoyed it.”

“Enjoyed it? I did more than just enjoyed it. You saved my life and the life of so many others. I was able to free myself of the dysfunction I was born into and finally realize that I was not at fault for the craziness life I had to live. You taught me that it’s okay to be born in a dysfunctional family, but it’s not okay to stay in one.”

“Well, I’m glad you learned that.”

The woman continues,

“Let me tell you something I grew up in a messed up family. When I was growing up my dad was a Jewish Nazi and my mother was a Catholic pastor who would preach down at the Methodist church not far from our home. She would preach to my dad about Jesus and my dad would tell her to shut up. It just didn’t make any sense to me why they ever got married in the first place. Let me tell you I was one messed up girl. But after reading your book I am changed woman. I have come to realize we are not our parents, we **are not** our family, and we are not our relatives. We can truly come into our own and be our own person. I just want to thank you for sharing those essays. If you write another one don’t be afraid to use my story. I won’t be mad at you. And I won’t sue you either. Sharing our lives is what we need to do. Thank you Dean Brent.

Thank you so much Dean Kyle Brent."

"You're welcome."

She stares at Dean with a huge appreciative smile. He just stands there uncomfortable not sure how to respond. The woman then grabs Dean and embraces him with a tight bear hug. Dean just receives it in hopes it will end soon. The woman lets go of Dean and smiles.

"Thank you Dean. I love you, man."

"You're welcome."

The woman walks away and Dean just watches her walk away in complete amazement.

"This is why I was not excited about returning. They don't even let you shop."

Dean finally takes a jar of organic pickles and continues shopping. As he walks down another aisle another woman notices him and she looks at him seeing if he is who she believes he is. She finally approaches Dean.

“Excuse me.”

Dean whispers to himself,

“Not again.”

He turns towards the woman and pauses. He just looks at her in amazement and not really sure how to respond. The woman speaks,

“Emanuel?”

“Yeah, it’s me.”

“My, God, Manny! Do you recognize me?”

“Karen.”

“So, you haven’t forgotten.”

She embraces him and he returns the embrace.

“Everyone said that after you moved to London you forgot us all, but I knew you wouldn’t forget me. It’s so great to see you. So, what are you doing here?”

“I’m doing a book signing tour.”

“Really? Why didn’t you tell anyone you were returning? Absolutely no one is talking about it?”

“It’s all over TV, the radio, newspapers. I thought everyone knew.”

“I don’t do that stuff. Manny you should have made a formal announcement. I can’t believe I am looking at you. I honestly thought you were gone for good.”

Dean speaks under his breath.

“So did I.”

“So how long are you staying?”

“I’m doing a six month American tour. I leave New Mexico for Texas in about a week.”

“Well, we have to get together before you leave. We haven’t seen each other in over three years. I want to get to talk to you before you leave for good. I know you have no plans of coming back here.”

“Well, I’m staying at the Holiday Inn, room 515. I’ll be in my room tonight after 9. Just come on over and knock.”

“That’ll be great. I’ll see you there.”

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