



A Father's Story

By Lionel Dahmer

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The father of serial murderer Jeffrey Dahmer, unaware of his son's ghastly crimes until they were publicized, explores his relationship with his son and the origins of madness in a memoir that examines the dark side of human nature. Reprint. *K. NYT.*

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Coming to terms with the horrors of his son's killings, the father of mass-murderer Jeffrey Dahmer reveals the dark and twisted life that preceded his son's slaughter of several victims.

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From Library Journal

Although he knew his son Jeffrey was disturbed, the author, like most parents, hoped he was "just a blink away from redemption." Thus, he was as horrified as others when Jeffrey's gruesome serial murders of young men came to light. (See Anne E. Schwartz's *The Man Who Could Not Kill Enough*, LJ 4/15/92). In this brief, honest book, Dahmer, a research chemist, searches for answers to the question of how his son became a monster. In retrospect, there are some clues--Dahmer even speculates that he is "a man whose son was perhaps only the deeper, darker shadow of himself." While no one, not even his father, can ever really know what produces a Jeffrey Dahmer, this is brave, heart-wrenching testimony. The author's unique point of view reminds us that the lives a murderer ruins include those who loved him most. Recommended. Previewed in Prepub Alert, LJ 11/15/93.

- *Gregor A. Preston, Univ. of California Lib., Davis*

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From Kirkus Reviews

Lionel Dahmer, father of mass murderer Jeffrey Dahmer, here writes one of the most courageous, unsensational books ever written about serial murder. It does not even summarize Jeffrey's crimes. Dahmer takes upon himself much of the guilt for his son's acts by considering a genetic predisposition to murder he may have passed on to his son; various acts of his own moral blindness that may have contributed to his son's deprived emotional being; and things he did and didn't do when certain symptoms appeared that might have alerted him to Jeffrey's lust for sexual atrocity. What parts of the father, the book asks, are replicated in the son? Largely, Jeffrey is a failure whose failings were earlier those of his father, though the father overcame each failing as its pain grew. Intellectually and physically inferior as a child, Lionel was tutored by his parents from first grade on, and by dint of hard study earned a doctorate in chemistry. A puny child, he took up body-building as a teenager and turned himself into a fine physical specimen. But he also had murderous dreams from which he would awake trembling. Jeffrey's mother was also a depressive, and her excessive pill-taking during pregnancy may well have damaged Jeffrey's genes. As a child, he developed a testicular hernia that, when treated by surgery, gave him a fear of castration and seemed to lead into lasting withdrawal from his family and friendships and, by the time he was 15, into alcoholism and a liking for dead things. Lionel sees Jeffrey's main psychotic trigger lying in a need to control: his own need for intellectual and physical control resulted in a glass wall between himself and Jeffrey; Jeffrey's need for control grew into a need for drugged or dead lovers who submitted to him absolutely. Clear, modest, intelligent--and extremely disturbing. -- *Copyright ©1994, Kirkus Associates, LP. All rights reserved.*

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