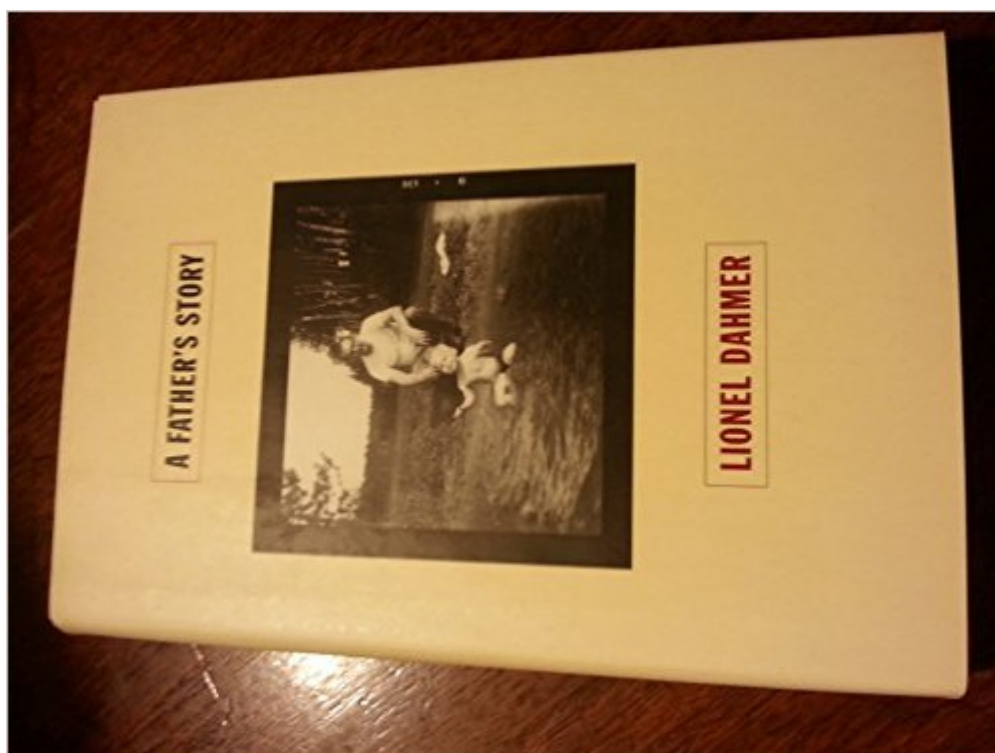


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A Father's Story



Synopsis

The father of serial killer Jeffrey Dahmer describes his shock at hearing the news of his son's crimes, his entry into a world of complete denial, and how, during Jeffrey's trial, he placed himself in his son's shoes. 150,000 first printing.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

A Father's Story by Lionel Dahmer is a harrowing account of a father trying to come to terms with the murderous crimes of his son. It is a story that brings us to the limits of belief in its descriptions of how a little boy became one of the nation's worst criminals. It is a true story that makes us ever cautious of our own children as they grow up in the modern world with all the influences that can lead children astray. But more than anything, A Father's Story is a warning to all of us that we need to be ever present for our sons and to provide direction and purpose for their lives. Lionel Dahmer is that father and Jeff Dahmer was that son. From the beginning of Jeff's life we see a traumatic series of events that may have played an important role in molding the violent man that Jeff would later become. His mother, for example, struggled with severe health problems during the pregnancy- nervous seizures and extreme sensitivity to noise- sometimes taking as many as twenty six pills a day to relieve her symptoms. Moreover, the first years of Jeff's life seemed anything but stable. Jeff's family changed homes several times while Lionel worked hard at finishing his PhD. On top of his mother's continuing illness, this time was plagued by arguments between both parents. Indeed stress had reached a peak with Jeff's mother Joyce feeling condemned to spending all her days at home while Lionel spent all his days and sometimes much of the night working in the laboratory. By

his own admission, the laboratory had become Lionel's obsession- his focus in life that would cause him to rush home for supper and back to the laboratory with barely a glimpse of Jeff as he played in the yard.

Most accounts of the lives of serial killers just skim the surface. They itemize the atrocities committed, and, if they have ambitions of providing psychological insight, they recount the beatings and the poverty the perpetrator suffered as a youth. However this account does neither. It couldn't if it wanted to. That's because Jeffrey Dahmer is one of the few murderers who has no childhood history of abuse to explain his actions. So in this book, his father is forced to go deeper to try to find the roots of his son's aberrations. The result is an anguished examination of the private festering that might have given rise to Jeffrey Dahmer's crimes. In the process of looking for early signs, early inklings, Lionel Dahmer traces many of the tendrils of the mad imaginings that he eventually found had ruled his son's life - back to himself. He says that in some ways, he believes his own obsessions might have been the shadowy precursors of his son's full-blown madness. Lionel Dahmer recounts how he was obsessed with fire, with bombs, with exercising mesmerizing control over others when he was a child. He also discusses the medical conditions his wife suffered from around the time of her difficult pregnancy with Jeffrey. While he does consider that some twisted genetic inheritance might have dictated Jeffrey's behavior, he is still left with a benumbing sense of blame and shame. There is a generally spare, somber, weighted tone to the writing in this book, although there are some very literate, almost poetic passages, as for example when Lionel admits that he buried himself so much in his work in the chemical analysis laboratory, that he saw Jeffrey only "in glimpses... felt him in snatches.

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