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Book Review: Out From Under, The Impact of Homosexual Parenting

by Dawn Stefanowicz

The subjugated child voice of Dawn Stefanowicz is no longer silenced. It speaks freely and, by some act of grace, has evolved into a beautiful, intelligent, mature voice, emboldened by a pressing concern for others similarly impacted and softened by an astounding ability to forgive and cherish those who exploited, neglected, and abused her. I read *Out From Under* in one sitting, my mouth hanging open in astonishment. A line from another book came forcefully to mind: "In families there are no crimes beyond forgiveness."

Stefanowicz invites us into her experience with a symbolic image and event. Represented on the book's cover is the image: a little girl sitting alone on the far end of a rickety pier, the horizon across the lake darkened with mountains and clouds. In her introduction she describes the event: it is summertime and her father asks her to come with him to the end of the pier, but she instinctively hesitates. The "inky blue lake" is deep, the "old wooden pier" is weathered. She writes, "It would be one thing to walk out there with a father who loved me unconditionally and could be depended on to protect me, but more and more I am coming to understand that this is not the kind of father I have." When she sees the camera in his hand, she realizes he just wants to take a picture. He waves her out to the farthest spot, snaps the shot, then turns without a word and walks away, leaving her alone in "this precarious place to which he's invited" her. So begins the story of an incredible life.

No detail overlooked, the author starts with her very earliest memories, some clear, some darkened by fear and disbelief, moving us through a frank and often disturbing narrative nevertheless generously seasoned with hard-won wisdom and compassion. It was a childhood that took place in a household ruled by a tragically damaged, narcissistic father of three – the author and her two brothers. Horrifically sexually abused as a child himself, this father spent more time with his same-sex sexual partners than his family in an attempt to mask his pain and fill his insatiable needs. Dawn's mother was there, too, but she was overwhelmed, inflexible, diabetic. Although Stefanowicz is careful to point out the good things her father taught her, such as a hard work ethic, the reader cannot help but see that the bad outweighed the good. In this home, modesty, decency, and love were starkly lacking, while nudity, lewdness, dishonesty, abuse, violence, neglect, cruelty, and dysfunction thrived.

The reader soon realizes it would be impossible for the author to accurately describe her life without exposing her father's lifestyle in the cosmopolitan Toronto gay subculture into which she was drawn. During her growing up years Cynthia Dawn's father took her to a (then illegal) gay nude beach, along with city hot spots, perhaps, she surmises, to attract more attention from those he wished to impress. Though he spent most nights away, incredibly, he brought a passing parade of sexual partners home where they lived and acted out alongside the confused and neglected family and often took it upon themselves to bizarrely interfere, such as by redecorating the house to their own tastes. She was further traumatized when she heard that some of them committed suicide when their relationships with her father ended. He was 51 when he died of AIDS.

Now in her forties with a husband and children of her own, and both her parents deceased, Stefanowicz has found peace and healing through her Christian faith sufficient to share her story. She courageously opens a locked and bolted door to reveal how parents with obscured sexual boundaries can reek havoc on the natural modesty and innocence of their children, causing nightmares, emotional problems, deep insecurities, sexual confusion, and tendencies toward self-destruction. With her disclosure she hopes to educate on the deficiencies and dangers of gay parenting, reverse and prevent the passing of public policies and legislation facilitating this travesty, and provide support and healing for the growing population of adult children sacrificed to this misguided social experiment.

She writes, "My father's sexual behaviors and choices went awry under the guise of sexual freedom, placing me in situations which would be troubling to many children. . . I feel this side of the 'sexual revolution' – its unspoken, negative effects on the children of gay parents – must be heard . . . I hope my voice can be useful in addressing current questions faced internationally on same-sex unions, gay parenting, sexuality, and education."

Throughout North America and beyond, Dawn Stefanowicz speaks and testifies before lawmakers of her experiences, also

citing overwhelming but generally overlooked scientific studies showing how the best interests of children are significantly compromised by homosexual parenting.

Still, it seems the overarching personal message of her book is not sociological but spiritual. Some say we are not here to make the world a better place so much as to become better people, and that true healing and wholeness can only occur through application of the divine principle of forgiveness. Surely, this disturbing and beautiful book could not have been written without it.

Out From Under is published by Annotation Press, 2007. To order call 1-877-421-READ or visit www.annotationbooks.com. For more information see www.dawnstefanowicz.com.

-Janice Graham

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