

Black and Blue: One Man's Reality

David Rhodes

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Coming home after his night shift before a holiday weekend, police officer Rhodes discovers that his three young daughters were left unattended for the entire night when their mother failed to return after going out. The episode is the latest in a series of odd, neglectful, and infuriating incidents exhibited by his wife after the family moves from Arizona back to their home state of Michigan following Rhodes's service in the air force.

Rhodes clearly has a story to tell—a couple, in fact. He recognizes that something is wrong in his marriage, but this knowledge is coupled with disbelief, denial, and uncertainty about what he can or should do. The ensuing custody battle prepares him for the next storm he must face: getting caught up in departmental politics and becoming a fall guy.

Narrated in stream-of-consciousness style, with loose adherence to punctuation and grammar, Rhodes's words are nonetheless very powerful and engaging. Readers will shake their heads in disbelief as Rhodes writes of his encounters with various court personnel and the prejudices he faces on his journey as a single father trying to raise his daughters on his own.

Interspersed between Rhodes's personal conflicts are the police calls. Each of these is a story in itself, covering all range of human emotions. Rhodes shows his sense of humor is still intact despite the tussles he has been through. For example, he admits that stressful situations often times bring up weird coping mechanisms, such as when he deals with a shooting victim: "Carefully, I opened his shirt, just tearing the buttons off and un-tucking it from his pants. Being that it was the new millennium, I knew that if the phone on the counter rang, it would be the nineteen seventies calling, asking this guy to please return these polyester clothes, his butterfly collared shirt and high waist disco pants." It turns out the victim was shot, but not wounded in any way. Rhodes chalks the incident up to being a miracle, one of several he witnessed in his police tour.

Black and Blue is based on true events, and the author gives a warning, acknowledging the content includes extreme language, violence, and adult sexuality. While this is true about the language, there is not a gratuitous amount of violence or sex. In keeping with the free-form style, chapters are not numbered, but their titles are illustrated by the author. Small, pencil-drawn pictures of content-appropriate icons—such as a telephone, an eye, an inhaler—appear next to the text.

Readers who like true-to-life experiences and who want to know about how others overcome adversity will enjoy this book. Because of the writing style, it might be difficult for some to follow. Those who stick with it will find a rewarding message.

ROBIN FARRELL EDMUNDS (June 22, 2012)

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