

Dear Dad, It's Over.**M Dickson**

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In this slender memoir, touring comedian M. Dickson offers unflinching honesty and emotion as she recounts the memories and events that have led her to pen a “Dear John” letter of sorts to the constant source of disappointment and hurt in her life: her father.

After her introduction, Dickson shares and reflects on various formative memories in her past, giving the readers a window into Dickson and her father’s strained relationship. Many of the instances Dickson shares are universal for the children of divorced parents: having to pack a suitcase and leave her beloved mother’s house on Thanksgiving; seeing her father raise a new child; and sometimes being the intermediary between parents. Dickson’s father never provides the love and support that could make these difficult circumstances less traumatic for his daughter—in fact most often his actions make the situations worse.

Most chapters offer intimate looks at moments that defined Dickson’s relationship with her father. Though her style is always simple, she vividly recreates her memories, capturing the moments of tremendous emotion with sincerity. From the wrenching pain of leaving a warm family gathering to go on her scheduled visit with her father to the burning indignation of being ridiculed for her career aspirations, Dickson’s honest portrayal of emotions is always realistic but never overly sentimental.

Perhaps most importantly, Dickson’s ability to reflect has given her a keen sense of perception, and her direct style allows her to communicate her insights in clear, honest ways. She has the self-awareness to comment on her own behavior and expectations, and, without any bitterness, she is able to make statements about divorce, parenting, and the difficult dynamics of half-siblings.

Despite having gained so much perspective, Dickson never comes across as preachy. Instead, she is always relatable, and though the book deals with her pain and hurt, she refuses to become a victim. Her ability to articulate her feelings will be helpful for teens or young adults going through similar circumstances, but the book would also be a good choice for divorced parents of young children. As Dickson’s experiences prove, sometimes the emotions surrounding a divorce cloud the judgment of those involved, and the book could offer some reminders to parents and caretakers.

With a clear voice, M. Dickson closes one chapter of her life with this memoir, and, after following her journey, readers will cheer her on into the next.

ALICIA SONDHI (April 20, 2012)

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