

Family Matters

Lance Lee

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Family Matters is a compelling memoir about an imperfect couple's rise to fame and how it affected the people around them, including their child.

Written from within a show business family, Lance Lee's memoir *Family Matters* concerns genealogical ties, love, and trauma.

In the course of his book, Lee discusses his family's history, including that of his famous parents, whose work affected his life. Lee's mother, Lucille Wilds, was a supermodel in the 1940s; his father, David Levy, was a writer at an advertising firm that shaped radio and television content. Levy also produced and directed a popular radio program that reached half of the households in the US; later, he created the television series *The Addams Family*.

The memoir is divided into four parts, each focusing on a different period of Lee's life. But despite its chronological progression, its sections often function independently of one another because of their multimedia composition. Lee dabbles in prose, essays, and poems to tell his family's story; the book also incorporates personal and professional photographs, news clippings, etiquette columns, posters and images, and the signed first page of the first episode of the original *The Addams Family* television series. A family tree at the beginning of the book clarifies the family's dynamics; in the text itself, many personalities are at play.

Lee, who indicts his family as a "deeply dysfunctional" one, also asserts that his family's troubles were in fact the genesis for *The Addams Family*, contributing to its phenomenal success. Though the Addamses are beloved in popular culture, he writes that their falsification of his family's life puts him at odds with their place in the US's collective psyche. To redress this with the truth, he merges memories from his youth with anecdotes from his parents' childhoods, addressing their relationships with their own parents (his father's parents were the inspiration for the elder Addamses).

In all, the book explores topics including culture, fame, identity, inheritance, religion, and success, tracing back to Lee's own recollections of his family and successful parents. Examining the Addamses, Lee draws contrasts, noting that his own father was "inseparable from his career," and that his mother was "the ultimate model" before becoming "the ultimate mother." Lee's quest for truth results in an ultimate sense of accomplishment:

Truth can't be taken for granted: it can be overexposed. It can require nurturing. Yet at other times it strikes with the force of revelation and we realize it was always there, only waiting for the right time.

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ANNA MARIA COLIVICCHI (October 21, 2022)

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