

The Empty Bowl

LETTER WRITER #3. Dear Sugar,

My father is a narcissist: controlling, vain, volatile, and charming. If I wasn't cheerful enough, I was locked in my room for days; if I made a joke he'd yell and curse at me. My father would denounce me as his child over slight disagreements. When he decided that everything was fine again, I was expected to accept his change of heart - no apologies offered (unless they were mine). I could never be perfect enough, and yet I tried so hard to make him proud, to make him care. He was my dad after all.

Still now, as an adult, it's not better. He is so consumed by his image that when he found out that my therapist - an understanding, kind, and sympathetic counselor - was a woman he knew, he insisted I stop seeing her. But three months ago he went too far. He betrayed my mother, and I was a fucking bitch for finding out about his infidelity.

People insist that family is important, that it is my duty to forgive the man that gave me life and to keep him in my life. He's the only father that I have. But is it worth the pain?

Signed,

When is too much too much?

~~SUGAR: Dear too much,~~

~~By maintaining a relationship with your abusive father is not worth it. Yes, he is the only father you will ever have, but that does not give him the right to abuse you. The standard you should apply in deciding whether to have an active relationship with him is the same one you should apply to all the relationships in your life: you will not be mistreated or unsuspected or manipulated.~~
~~Your father does not currently meet that standard.~~
~~My mother told my father because he'd been violent and abusive. I have had parents as an adult, and~~

~~I'd always heard that you're not supposed to pick up baby bottles that once you touch them their mama wants 'em back and get them, but it doesn't matter if that's true or not. I knew there was only one damn thing to do: I put the baby bird in a paper bag and smothered it with my hands.~~
~~Nothing that has died in my life has ever died easily and this bird was no exception. I could feel it through the paper bag, pulsing against my hand and rearing up, simultaneously flaccid and fascinated beneath its translucent skin, precisely as my grandfather's cock had been.~~
~~There it was. There it was again. The ghost of that old man's cock would always be in my hands. But I understood what I was doing this time. I understood that I had to press harder than I could bear. It had to die. Pressing harder was murder. It was mercy.~~
~~That's what the fuck it was. The fuck was mine. And the fuck is yours too. That question does not apply to everything every day. If it does, you're watching your life. If it does, you are on my mind and you are not a long account. Ask better questions. The fuck is your life?~~

~~Yours,
Sugar~~

LW (Female) - Narcissist #2