

## ABSTRACT

Communication is absolute matter that every single human in this world must have to understand one individual to other individual especially in family and public spare. *Jancee Dunn* wrote a novel entitled *Why Is My Mother Getting a Tattoo* that reveal how she communicate with many individuals with different background throughout her life. In this book review, writer intends to discuss this novel's strengths and weaknesses. Through this book review, the writer suggest to read this novel, because through the story, the reader will study about the way to communicate with the people around.

Keyword : book review, novel, strength, weakness

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background of the writing

Communication is one of the most important matters for living things, especially for human. One has to communicate in order to help us fulfill our needs and build a good relationship, because someone cannot get what he/she wants if he/she does not say it.

Otherwise, communication in the family is the most important key to build a good relationship, especially how people understand each other through small discussion in a family. How father discusses his boy's hobby, how mother discusses with her daughter about her daughter's period, and many more discussion are needed to strengthen the bond of the family.

*Why is my mother getting a tattoo?* is a novel written by Jancee Dunn that provides the experience of how to build a good relationship within a family through family communication. The story of the novel is based on Jancee Dunn's real life experience with her family.

The writer chooses this novel because it is one of the finalists for James Thurber prize for American humor and it has a lot of good things with a good impact that can be taken. James Thurber prize for American humor itself is one of the programs of Thurber house to the only thing that recognize humor writing in America.

### 1.2 The Purpose of the Writing

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### 1.3 Jancee Dunn and her works



Jancee Dunn grew up in Chatham, New Jersey. From 1989 to 2003, now she lives with her husband, Tom Vanderbilt, and daughter in Brooklyn, New York.

Her works for novels are *But Enough About Me* (2006), *Don't Forget About Me* (2008), *Why Is My Mother Getting A Tattoo?* (2009), and recently she collaborated with Cyndi Lauper with novel entitled *Cyndi Lauper: A Memoir* (2012).

Beside Novel, she has also written many different publications, such as the New York *Times*, *Vogue*, *GQ* (where she wrote a monthly sex advice column for five years) and *O, The Oprah Magazine*, where she wrote an ethics column entitled *Now What Do I Do?* From 2001-2002.

She was also an entertainment correspondent for Good Morning America Prior to that she was a *veejay* for MTV2 from 1996 until 2001.

## SUMMARY OF THE BOOK

Jancee Dunn starts the story with chapter titled “Triple-Sausage Stuffing with Sausage Sauce”. Starting with her younger sister, Heather decided to paint her fire-place white. This would be trifling matter for in most families, but not for their family. Their family did everything through discussion, so the conversation would end up with debate. Many suggestions came from everywhere, and every suggestion had a strong point from the suggester. The story continued with the arrangement of Jancee Dunn’s wedding with her fiancé, Tom. As expected, many debates were storming in her family with many ideas. What, who, when, and how make the bride and the groom became confused. Jancee and Tom decided something that they would keep it simple and just did the dates and initials. So that the problem was solved.

“The Hidden Dangers Lurking In Your Bathroom Sink”, tells the story about how her father and mother give their children precautions by always sending a newspaper clipping about “deadly household tragedies”. Heather and Jancee found it annoying, sometimes.

“The Joys of a Breakfast Buffet, You Can’t Go with Puppies, You Don’t Have to Get Crazy, You Make Me Feel Like Dancing” are the chapters of conversation between Jancee and Julie, her best friend, by the phone. They talked about everything. Julie always called regularly and always had a topic to discuss with Jancee. The discussions were about how their family was when having breakfast, how Julie’s children being bullied at school, about Julie’s phone activity when her dad was eavesdropping on her and about their song playlist.

“Sure Are a Lot of Memories in This Garage”, tells the reader about the nostalgic memory in Jancee’s family house. The family was also having a communication about the experience with things stored in their garage.

“This Is a Prank, Right?” Is a chapter of Jancee’s argument about having a child. Jancee believed that having a child was destroying the world slowly, bearing babies lead to overpopulated world. That is the saying in her head. Slowly but surely, their family discusses about it, and finally she gives up with her opinion about having a child. Otherwise when she got pregnant and went to tell Tom, Tom answered her with “This is a prank, right?”.

The final chapter is “I’m Gettin’ a Tattoo”, Jancee’s mother surprisingly made an announcement in the middle of dinner that she wanted to get a tattoo of a raven in her wrist. As always, debates and arguments are firing to each other on the top of dining table. Time passed by. Finally, the rest of the family gives up. Jancee finally finds the best tattoo artist in New Jersey and she did it. A raven tattoo in her mother’s wrist made her ask to herself whether she was as crazy as her mother?

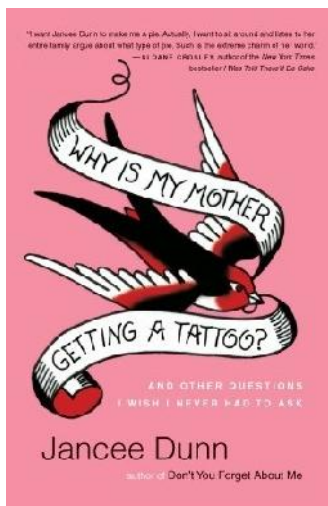
## REVIEW OF THE BOOK

After lots of reading, the writer found that there are lots of strong points in this book. Not only strong points, but also weak points will be also reviewed. In this occasion, the writer will describe those point of strengths and weakness of the novel.

### 3.1 The Strengths of the Book

This novel has some strengths to learn. We can get them from its book cover, author's writing style, theme. These can give us some moral message and make us enjoy reading the novel.

#### 3.1.1 Book Cover



The first strength of the novel is the cover. The cover of this book is quite simple with bird carrying a ribbon with title inscription “WHY IS MY MOTHER GETTING A TATTOO?” in pink background.

Why Jancee Dunn chooses to use this cover comes from the last chapter of the book that depicts her that want to become free, but she does not want to leave her feminism and her family is symbolized by red black white colored swallow bird in pink background. The swallow bird can be interpreted the symbol of the rise from the darkness and freedom. Colors of the bird are red, white and black. Red color is symbolizing bravery, power, risk, care, and objective achievement. White is symbolizing peace, forgiveness, spirituality, holiness, modesty, cleanliness. While black is symbolizing power, mystery, deep feeling, pride and unhappiness. The pink color in the cover symbolizes affection, love, trust, feminism, friendship. The ribbon carried by the swallow bird symbolizes the bond.

#### 3.1.2 Writing Style

The next strength of the novel is the writing style. Jancee's narration of each chapter makes the reader able to imagine the real situation of that time. She narrates it in a very good details of “what she does?”, “when it does?”, “how it happen?”, “why it happen?”, and also “who she with?” She also includes some comedy elements to make sure that the readers are not getting bored with her story. Dunn also good at word choice, she uses an unusual word to make her novel better. This is truly a skill that needs a great imagination and good humor sense in stringing up the words, as described in the following quotation:

It's true that he actually does have tea at three o'clock every afternoon, no matter what country he happens to be in. And yes, I do understand why he won't use any product with the word *extreme* or *turbo* in it. But what, exactly, is “civilized” about “no movie sequels, ever, with

the exception of *The Godfather* and *Star Wars*”? And can he really fight against patronizing stores with tip jars? He huffs that employers should pay their employees well instead of making them beg for tips, plus sight of the jar “gives me general tip anxiety. Why stop at coffee shop employees? Why not tip the gas station attendant or the UPS man?”

Tom's rules have taken a toll on our relationship more than once. During a recent trip to Tokyo, the two of us got into a shouting match after dozens of restaurants failed to meet his criteria and we trudged for hours through the slate-colored rain. After he rejected one place for having fluorescent lights ("they make me nauseous and I can't enjoy my food") and another for its loud background music, I felt like I was trapped in an endless loop of *Rain Man*. I lost it. "I just want to eat dinner," I hollered miserably, as passerby gave us wide berth. He wouldn't budge. Finally we found a ramen place that was to his liking.

(Dunn, 2009: 92-93)

Based on the text above, Dunn tells the reader about her experience of having lunch with her husband, she also mumble about how her husband makes many criteria for their place to have lunch. Of course, she also tells the reason why her husband does it because of their experience in Tokyo. She also tells the habit of her husband to always have tea at 3 o'clock, no matter where he is in.

The choice of "slate colored-rain" phrase is the example of she using an unusual word to mention rain in usual way.

### 3.1.3 Theme

The next strength is the theme of this book. The theme of this novel is a good communication between a main character in the family and public spare.

Discussing and sharing thoughts to other people are the most important thing to do, to avoid the miscommunication from one to another. Jancee Dunn believes that human being must communicate with other humans to complete the duty of human as a social creature. She also tells the reader to let other people know their feelings. Every human has a very different thought even though they look alike. A good communication can be built with small discussion with family, friend or maybe with stranger. This can be see from the dialog between Jancee and her sharing target in the quotation below:

She frowned. "But what did you do with your kids?" I replied that I didn't have any.

"Why not?" She had already told me that she had two young sons.

This question has been put to me probably a hundred times. It always struck me as an odd thing to ask, because it was so personal, and also the very phrase "Why not?" implied that I was somehow shirking my duty as a woman. In any case, I never seemed to deliver an answer that satisfied my inquisitor. "Well," I began. "my husband and I have always been on the fence about it, and in the meantime, we've been having so much fun that the years have just sort of slipped by." I shrugged.

"Hmm," she said, and I knew what was coming next. "Don't you think it's selfish not to have children?"

(Dunn, 2009 : 169)

Based on the quotation, the reader can see how Jancee shares her thought and feeling to a stranger she met at a flight. Though Jancee thinks that it is a very personal question, but she responds her nicely, because she knows that good communication cannot be built with anger and insult.

### **3.2 The Weaknesses of the Book**

Despite there are many strengths in this book, there are some weaknesses of this book.

#### **3.2.1 Lack of Footer Description**

The first weakness of the novel is the lack of footer description of strange terms. There are so much strange terms in this novel, but the author does not give any footer descriptions. It makes the foreigners reader who do not come from that region unable to understand the meaning of the strange terms. Here are some examples of the author are using strange terms :

One maxim: Inspect your naked body every single day for defects. Polly gave her “**derriere**” a rigorous daily once-over for “**crepeyness** [sic],” then moved on to her legs to detect any emergent varicose veins, and finally to her stomach to catch any folds. (Dunn, 2009 : 115-116)

Based on the quotation, the word *derriere* comes from french, which means person’s bottom, and *Crepeyness [sic]*, comes from latin adverb *sic* which means thus. It used by the author to show the error on quoted word ‘crepeyness’. In the writer’s oppinion, it should be good if the author gives a footnote after she writes a strange term in her novel.

#### **3.2.2 Lack of Suspense**

The second weakness of the novel is that the book has lack of suspense. The reader which actually a fans of action theme book will find it boring to read this book. Jancee Dunn only tells her story in this book in flat and comedic ways. She never adds a suspense in any story in this book. The ending of all chapters is also guessable. If the reader of the novel wants to find some suprise by the end of chapters, he/she will not find it. Dunn also not using Freytag’s pyramid: five dramatic structures. This makes clear that this novel does not a good suspense.

## CONCLUSION

The writer considers Jancee Dunn's *Why Is My Mother Getting a Tattoo* as one of the good nonfiction novels. The novel manages to show the process of being involved in social interaction. Jancee Dunn as the author of this book successfully gives the reader a nice narration feeling in reading a novel.

Based on the review, this book has several strong points, namely the exciting cover, the good writing style, and the theme of this book. On the other hand, the writer finds some weak points, such as: the use of strange term without explanation, the lack of suspense that makes boring in the eyes of action or mystery fans reader. Although this book has some weaknesses, it cannot be the reason who love nonfiction stories to stop reading this book, especially comedy.

By reading this book, the reader will see the art of communicating with other people, how to debate with family, to discuss with colleague, and to talk to strangers. All of them are provided with smart comedy elements to make sure the reader not to stop reading this novel from the first chapter to the end of last chapter.

This book also gives the reader a glimpse of how the feeling of becoming Jancee Dunn, the experience of becoming somebody else because the writer of this novel is providing every detail of what she sees and what she thinks in a very good narration. Therefore this book is highly recommended to those who love nonfiction story with a lot of comedy inside.



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