

GENERATIONAL CURSE

SHORT STORY EXCERPT

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“This proposal of your brother’s has your father and I worried. We think Debra is wonderful, but they’ve only known each other for 3 months, and she doesn’t know your brother as well as she thinks she does.”

Melanie being a bit more direct. “ You mean she doesn’t know about his crazy mood swings, being charged up, super excited, yet sometimes rude, and aggressive, then falling into weeks of depression. I’m sorry but I can’t be happy for them, because she’s awesome, but she has no idea what she’s getting herself into.

James Sr. says, “It’s not his fault, he has a condition. He tries to control it. Sometimes he just needs time to himself. He’s handling it.

“I wonder if he’s going into a manic phase. I’m also worried about how he’ll react when Debra sees this side of him. Will she reject him, will she try to support him. It’s a lot for her to take on, especially if he’s not being honest with her. Hiding it can’t be good for him, or her.

“Mama, he doesn’t really believe anything is wrong with him. That’s why he won’t get treated, and why his relationships always come to an end. If I wasn’t his sister I wouldn’t put up with him either, and that’s why I keep my distance.

“You two used to be so close. I don’t like seeing how far apart you’ve grown.”

James Jr. chimes in. “Billy is ok. He really loves Debra, and I think that’s why he proposed. He’s not in a manic phase, he’s happy. Besides, I’ll be there to help him, if we see him going off the deep end. We’ll be there for him, that’s what family is for.

“Jr., frankly, you’re enabling him. I know you want to protect him, but you can’t protect him from himself. When he gets here, we need to all be on the same page.”

“And what page is that?”

“We need to encourage him to take some time and think through this engagement and take some more time to get to know Debra and for her to get to know him. The good and the bad. He needs to tell her about his Bipolar.”

“ I don’t know, maybe he should tell her that when he’s ready. As far as their engagement, I think she’s great for him. She’s great, period and by the time the wedding happens they will know each other much better.”

They hear Billy come in the front door. Melanie gets nervous, because she doesn’t think this is going to go well.

“Hey there son, how are you doing today?”

“Hey Dad, I’m having a pretty swell day. We got that contract for the oil rigs with that new company that I was working on.”

“Whoa, way to go bro, good work.” James Jr. smiles at him, hoping it will make him more at ease.

Billy looks around at everyone, wondering why they were all here before him. “So what’s this family meeting about”

The room is silent and finally, James Sr. speaks up. “Son, we were all really surprised when you proposed to Debra at dinner the other night. It seems a bit sudden and a man ought to take his time with something like this. The woman ought to as well.”

Billy looks at each of their faces. So this is why they’re having a family meeting he thinks, because they don’t want him to marry Debra. “Dad, you all seem to get on great with Debra. Y’all have told me how good she is for me, so what’s changed?”

His mother speaks up but in a calm quiet tone.. “Nothing Billy. It’s just that we think you should take more time to get to know each other, the good and the bad and everything in between and that takes time.”

“ I don’t need any more time. I love her, and I’m happy with her. What else is there to know?”

But does she know all there is to know about you? Mel cautiously asks

“What are you getting at?” Billy starts to see where this is going and he’s getting upset.

“Sometimes your mood turns really dark, and you get angry about the smallest things, then later you're sorry, but a couple months later it’s the same thing. I’m tired of the roller coaster ride. Eventually Deb will be too.

James Jr. attempts to diffuse the situation by explaining, “ We’re just concerned that you may be getting overly hyper like you sometimes do and jump the gun on things without thinking them through. And you sometimes have some depression, or anger and maybe Debra hasn’t been with you long enough to know how to handle that.”

Billy stands up, and starts pacing. “So you feel this way too? You think I need to slow things down with Debra, because what? She hasn’t been with me long enough to realize I’m crazy!! And you think I don’t know what I’m doing just because I know what I want, and I’m not going to waste years of our life getting to know each other.”

James Sr. goes to put a hand on his son’s arm. No one is saying you’re crazy son. We know you’re not. Just calm down, we’re only trying to help.

Baby, you know you have Bipolar Personality Disorder. Just because you think you’re managing it, doesn’t make it go away. “Trust me, I know. Debra may not be able to handle that. You need to tell her, you should have told her before you proposed. What if she isn't willing to be