

to read it I will, whatever you want to do.” It wasn’t just the story of my friend dying; it was a story about loss and grief and friendship and love. It’s called a story, and the names are changed. But that’s all. Same thing with writing about my mother. That book, *Excerpts from a Family Medical Dictionary*, began after my mother died. I did the eulogy at her memorial service, and then my family, who was there, said, can you give us a copy of the eulogy, and did you write anything about when you were taking care of your mom? And then we made this book. When the book was published, my mother’s sister and her husband—she really loved her sister—came to the big opening, and we gave them a copy of the book. It was a real family thing. And so I feel like I try to do that honorably.

I was writing about them and I was writing about me, but I was also writing about the experience, what happens to someone after people die, what you remember and what you don’t remember. To the degree that I’ve been able to ask people, I have, and I think otherwise I’ve tried to honor things as much as I can and not just tell tawdry stories.

I’ve put a lot of my grief about my mom into that book. And there was also a kind of retrospective forgiveness of my father, who was not a bad man—he didn’t beat me or abuse me or anything—he was just a troubled guy not cut out to be a husband or a dad. This book is about embracing and forgiving him and getting beyond that. It’s really helpful to not suppress-contain, but to hold-contain grief. Art as a container for grief can be really helpful. Different friends have said, “I read this book a year after my mom died, and it helped.” Or, “I read this after my friend’s mom died, and it helped me understand my friend.” And that’s good that it can do that. That’s good.

BUCKINGHAM

I’d love to hear more about the level of mysticism in your work.

BROWN

Do you know the name of the first named woman who ever wrote a book in the English language that we know is written by a woman? Not anonymous, but the name of the woman who wrote the first book in the English language? Julian of Norwich. 1374. Her book is