

AMY DUGGAR KING

HOLY DISRUPTOR

Shattering the Shiny Facade by Getting
LOUDER WITH THE TRUTH

HOLY DISRUPTOR

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AMY DUGGAR KING

WITH SUSY FLORY

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Holy Disruptor

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*To the ones who've walked through trauma—
the kind that lingers in body, mind, and memory—
to those who were hurt by people
you were supposed to trust,
to those from complicated families
where love came with conditions
and where you were expected
to absorb the damage and never speak of it.*



*To the ones who've carried weight that was never yours,
to the ones who learned how to survive before
they ever learned how to rest,
to those unfairly labeled
too much, too sensitive, too different, too loud—
you were never the problem.*



*You are not your trauma.
You are not too broken to heal.
You are worthy of love
and of a life that feels honest, peaceful, and whole.*



*This book is for you.
And I pray God uses these words
to lead you there—
one truth, one step, one breakthrough at a time.*

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CHAPTER FIFTEEN

“Famy”

We received mountains of mail throughout the year and especially at Christmastime, including countless crocheted gifts and heartfelt letters from adoring fans. Gift cards for restaurants and Amazon arrived with large balances. The media built us up to such an extent that I even found myself on the cover of *People* magazine. They called me after my wedding because they wanted to do a cover story, and I specifically told them, “I think you have the wrong family member.” Despite all this, I never really considered myself famous; I was just the cousin to a famous family.

I had years and years of pampering, and although I’m grateful for the opportunities, it messed with my head. I really had to check myself because even the smallest taste of popularity can make me egotistical. I know that even though I tried to keep my ego in check, I failed at times. My mom called it “fame brain.”

Reflecting back, I realize how surreal it was. It wasn’t just about the material perks. The everyday experiences of others—simple tasks like checking in at the airport, renting a car, or handling any sort of minor inconvenience—were alien to me for a long time. Even my

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passport was expedited and ready to pick up the same day because I was flying out of the country on a whim. Though I was provided for, spoiled even, I still had to work as a nanny to earn an income.

I wasn't prepared for the moment I was put on a worldwide stage and how the floodgates would open to the harshest criticism imaginable. The pressures of social media transformed my life in unexpected ways. From random encounters in the supermarket in which people felt compelled to pray for my salvation to a surging number of Instagram followers, it all happened so fast. I received thousands of messages, and the swell in popularity brought with it an overwhelming wave of unsolicited opinions and relentless scrutiny.

People are quick to judge based on what they see on a screen, usually without knowing the full story. Trolls on social media will say anything behind the safety of their device. The problem with this behavior is that it dehumanizes the person on the receiving end. How many times can you be told, "You're so crazy," before you start to believe it? Bullies failed to realize that I am a real person, with feelings and experiences, who has a life outside of what they saw on their TV screen. Maybe they did realize it, and they just didn't care. All I know is that I've never pretended to be perfect, yet I was constantly judged as if I had claimed to be.

The nastiness of the comments got under my skin. Behind every screen is a human being who feels pain, just like everyone else. The internet makes it easy for people to lash out without pausing to consider the impact of their words. Reading hateful and hurtful messages day after day will take a serious toll on a person's mental health. They start to question their self-worth and doubt their abilities.

When I first started reading the vicious comments from viewers, I cried for days. With the weight of my dad's harsh words already heavy on my heart, I felt vulnerable and insecure. When media outlets and internet trolls began tearing me down and having a field day at my

expense, I felt even smaller, crushing any sense of self-worth I had left. The feeling of being exposed and ridiculed, both by those closest to me and by strangers online, made me question everything about myself. Those questions haunted me for years. *Was I a mistake? Why am I even part of this family? What is wrong with me?*

I didn't grow up with cameras on me. It wasn't until my twenties that I became exposed to that level of scrutiny, and at that age, I wasn't mature enough to handle it. People commented on everything. They hated my clothes, thought I was stuck-up, questioned where my eyebrows were, and claimed my lips weren't real. Some even called me a con artist, a grifter, and a faker who only wanted fame and used my family's last name to get it. Commenters criticized my weight, speculated constantly about whether I was pregnant, and told me I wasn't a real mother because I had only one child. I've been told numerous times I wasn't a true Christian and have had every mistake I made pointed out. Fake accounts were made pretending to be me, and I had to go on the *Today* show to clear my name because some crazy woman made a claim that I was having an affair with an older man.³

I've had friends turn on me. People I thought I could trust sold lies about me to tabloids for a few extra bucks. After Dillon and I were married, we were followed by paparazzi to Mexico for our honeymoon. I've even been followed by paparazzi at my local grocery store. I've been put through the ringer. I can't imagine what it would be like to be insanely famous. *No thank you!*

Then someone on Reddit came up with a brutal nickname for me: “Famy” (famous + Amy). Although it's not the best nickname out there, I totally get how someone thought they were being clever to come up with it. But let me remind you of this: You have to realize how easily editing can distort reality. Producers had a significant role in shaping how I was portrayed. They were always telling me how to act and the kind of emotion they wanted to draw from certain scenes.

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They wanted something funny and off-the-wall, so that's what I gave them. Producers and editors have a powerful ability to craft any type of narrative, and they can make anyone fit the story line. They can manipulate scenes, splice together conversations, and create the image they want. News flash: Reality TV isn't actually real. Episodes are carefully curated to maximize dramatic impact and viewer engagement, often at the expense of the individuals involved.

When I was constantly bombarded with negative judgments from strangers about myself, it was hard not to internalize some of that negativity or even lash out occasionally. Cyberbullying has been rough. It got to the point where my husband would first read the emails and delete the rude and hurtful ones. I've had enough name-calling in my life to last a lifetime, and the last thing I need is a bitter person hiding behind their computer screen, spreading malicious lies and false information and making fun of every move I make. It's bizarre to think that my life is under a magnifying glass for some strange, hateful person out there. The constant scrutiny and judgment can feel humiliating.

Over the years I've heard some truly ridiculous accusations, such as a rumor that I had my cousin James's love child. Um, *no!*

There's also some confusion around the name Duggar. The truth is, I was born a Duggar because my mom was single when she had me, so she gave me her last name. When I was nineteen, my parents got married, but I was a legal adult, so I kept the Duggar last name. When I got married, Duggar became my maiden name and I took Dillon's last name—King.

Another persistent rumor swirled around a stage name some record producers gave me when I was offered a contract at the age of twenty-two. "Amy Jordyn" was proposed to me by a country music label out of Nashville. It was confusing to fans because my aunt and uncle have a daughter named Jordyn, so there was online speculation

about some connection between my cousin and the proposed stage name. Though I had no power over what fans believed, I knew that the story behind the recording contract was much deeper than just a name change.

It took time, but I no longer let those accusations, speculations, and lies bring me down. If you ask me, I’m in good company. Jesus was hated and misunderstood. Yet despite all the negativity he faced, he remained true to himself and his mission. I’m determined to do the same. I will continue to be myself and ignore all the hatred out there. I refuse to add to it; instead, I choose to rise above the negativity and focus on spreading positivity and kindness.

Don’t let the opinions of strangers define your worth. Everyone has hidden insecurities. Instead, foster encouragement because a simple compliment can create ripples of positivity. Social media can be hurtful, but it can also connect us in wonderful ways. Let’s use it to build one another up rather than tear one another down.

Don’t let the opinions of strangers define your worth.



Despite the negativity, my character grew in popularity as the television show climbed the charts, and I began to receive offers for other shows like *Big Brother* and *Dancing with the Stars* (an automatic no, since dancing was forbidden!).

Producers used to ask me, “What kind of show do you want?” It was a complicated question. Did I really *want* my own show? I was already busy and trying to keep everyone happy.

“What else do you like to do?” was another tough question, one I answered with, “I love to sing.” When the producers heard that, they

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started working on a television show about me pursuing a career as a recording artist in Nashville, singing with the biggest and brightest country music stars. I wasn't quite sure what to think. It would be nice to step into my own career after appearing for years on *19 Kids and Counting*, but I'd always dreamed of other things, like being a host of a show or just settling down as a wife and mother—my ultimate dream. How did country music artist fit?

Even though the Duggar show portrayed me as an adventurous girl always on the go, I've never been one to chase fame. In reality, I've always loved shopping at thrift stores or being at home—wearing no makeup, relaxing with my cat and an iced coffee while lounging on my sofa in sweatpants. Not exactly the high-octane life of a recording star on a tour bus somewhere on the highways of America.

My mom's dream had been to have a career in music. So the producers decided to film a special episode of *19 Kids and Counting* in which I traveled to Nashville to pursue my country music dream. I agreed, just to see what it would be like, and invited my mom and grandma to come with me. Once we were there, cameras followed me as I recorded several songs and worked with industry professionals. If everything worked out right, the producers told me I might have my own show, which would be a spin-off of *19 Kids and Counting*.

I can sing like a canary, but the producers wanted to make it look like I couldn't sing—like I was starting from scratch. When I did a beautiful take on a piece of music, they asked me to roll again and mess up the song so it would look like I was struggling. I sighed inwardly, disappointed at their portrayal of me: *Okay, it's clear that I'll be playing a role again. I thought this time would be different, that I'd portray myself the way I truly am. Seriously, why can't I be good at something on camera?*

But before I knew it, a top country music label showed strong interest in signing me to a deal, and I went with my producer to a high-rise

building in downtown Nashville to meet with them. My mouth just about dropped open when I saw Dierks Bentley in the lobby.

“Hello, who are you?” he said, grabbing a cold beverage out of a refrigerator.

“Hi, Dierks. Nice to meet you. I’m Amy.” What else was there to say?

After the crew filmed me singing for a group of executives for the episode, they left. I was invited to a special meeting, minus the cameras. My producer and I took an elevator ride to the twenty-seventh floor, where we walked into a large conference room full of people, every single one a male. There must have been twenty men in there with my male producer and me.

I immediately felt nervous. Where were the women? There didn’t seem to be another female anywhere on the entire floor. The atmosphere in the room was charged, crackling with energy, and I grew more and more uncomfortable. I was just twenty-two years old, had never done anything like this before, and had no team of encouragers with me. My grandma and mom were waiting for me back at the hotel.

A huge stack of paper was set down in front of me—a recording contract. Everyone looked at me expectantly, but I knew I had better start reading so I understood what was being offered. First of all, they were offering me a lot of money. I wasn’t an accountant, but the numbers seemed to add up to the potential for millions and millions of dollars. Wow, okay. I wasn’t quite sure what to think about that.

But as I turned the pages and skimmed over the paragraphs, I was shocked at the amount of control I would be handing over to the record label. Just like all of us Duggars signed agreements to let our private lives be made public on television, including deeply personal moments in personal relationships, medical crises, or hospital treatments, signing this contract would mean yielding complete control of my life to a record company—where I could go, what I could do, what

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parties I'd be required to attend, whether I could talk about religion or who I voted for (that is, not at all), when or where I could get married, when or if I could have babies, where I'd be traveling and touring, "friends" I'd be required to spend time with, what I'd wear, the color of my hair, the perfect weight I had to aim for . . . I had to stop reading. It was clear I would be signing over virtually complete control of my personal life in return for a chance at a music career. The record company would tear me down, re-create me, sell my image and performance to the public, and require me to go along with all their decisions. In return for boatloads of money (supposedly), I would be owned.

A debate raged inside me. I already felt that so much was demanded of me, that my life wasn't really my own. But an opportunity like this was a dream, something so many people were chasing. And then there was the money! I wouldn't have to scrounge anymore to pay my bills and try to plan for the future. I'd have a fat bank account and my own career.

But out of nowhere came a quiet thought: *This sounds awful*. I hesitated, though. I felt the pressure of the men around me. I sensed they wanted control. I felt like a target, a piece of meat. I was outnumbered—no match for all the power in that room.

Then came an inner voice whispering, *Don't sign it*.

I put down the pen and looked up. And with a shaky voice I said, "I'm not going to sign it."

Someone in the room responded, "A million other girls would sign this in a heartbeat."

I took a quick breath, looked around at the disgruntled and frustrated faces, and made my decision. "Then choose them," I said. I stood up.

"Are you sure?" my producer asked with no small measure of intensity.

"I've never been more sure of anything in my life."

We were quickly ushered out of the room, into the elevator, and out of the building. My country music career was over before it ever really began, and “Amy Jordyn” was retired before she ever had a chance to shine. I was starting to see how money, power, and control had a dark side. Sure, my name would have been in the lights. I would have had fans, opened for huge stars, had money for a new wardrobe, plus a glam team, but at what cost? I would have been a shell of a person. A well-known Bible verse from Matthew’s gospel danced through my head: “What good will it be for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul?” (16:26).

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