

## Our Stories

Running away from the police, never living in a proper home, always under constant stress because of her uptight family; this was Jeannette Walls' life. "The Glass Castle", an autobiography, written by Jeannette Walls describes her childhood and struggles she went through with her family while living life on the run. Jeanette's father; Rex Walls was an alcoholic who throughout the book, seemed as if he was the "bad guy". He couldn't sustain his family, leading me to question him. For example, why did he try to give his family a good life sometimes but at other times, he would just drink and drink like he had no other care in the world? It didn't make sense because the pain he would put his family through made it seem like there could be no justice found within his actions. I felt like I couldn't sympathize with him because I figured that him giving his kids a tough childhood would result in them growing up to be messed up in some way and that would all be his fault. There were points in their lives when the kids didn't have any shoes to wear, in fact they had calluses on their feet and were so used to walking barefoot that nothing hurt anymore, meanwhile the whole time, the dad was spending the little amount of money that he made on beer. So, I would wonder. Was this guy bipolar? Does he even care about his kids or does he even want the best for them? He just seemed two-faced.

At one point, Jeannette wrote about a time when her dad was drunk, and he made a huge mess in the middle of the living room. He knocked over everything and broke glass and even punched a hole in the wall in account of his rage. Her family was scared, but they were also fed up with it all. They were tired of seeing their dad act like this and wanted him to see what he had done. He had promised to stop drinking for so long, but he never had so they decided to leave his

mess. When he got sober, he saw what he had done. The mess and pain he had caused his family. I don't know what I expected, but I didn't expect him to avoid the mess, yet that's exactly what he did. He ignored it for weeks. He didn't want to face what he had done, so instead he would walk around the glass and the hole in the wall, to avoid the confrontation his consciousness would play on himself if he had to take in his actions. So, I thought that he did realize what he had done, because him ignoring it was also in a way him acknowledging it. Deep down he was obviously aware of it, so why didn't he clean it up? At least to show his family that he was sorry without saying "I'm sorry". He could have apologized through his actions, but he didn't do anything. I concluded that he lacked maturity, because if he were mature enough, he would have sucked up his pride, and he would have fixed what he destroyed. I felt so much anger towards this character. He didn't deserve a family, although sometimes I could sympathize through him. He just seemed like a bipolar man, but Jeanette never mentioned that, so I couldn't form that conclusion about his character.

He had this big dream for his family where he would build them a glass castle and that would be their permanent home. There would be no more running away from the FBI, and everything would be good. He talked about it to his family so much, that it seemed believable. They all believed it, and although nobody knew how, he spoke about it so convincingly that they all saw it as a reality- even me as a reader. I was expecting the glass castle to appear somewhere throughout the whole book, even as a symbol, but his dreams never turned into reality. Honestly, I kept wondering why he was so convinced that this was going to happen because his financial situation and everything made it seem so impossible. He had the floor plan and everything for the castle, everything except for the money and motivation to get the money. This made me not hate him completely, I had some respect for him. He wasn't all that terrible of a father, because when he was acting mentally stable and when he was sober, he took care and looked out for his

family. I knew something was being left out about him, so I was just assuming that either Jeannette didn't know about it or he might change.

Then everything I questioned about Rex Walls started to make sense, when they had to go live in his mother's house for a while. They were on the run and had nowhere else to go so this was the last place he wanted to go to, but he was desperate, so he brought his family to finally meet his mother. Desperate times called for desperate needs, but I was questioning why he had such a problem with going to his mom's house. Even Jeannette wrote about how she was confused as to why she had never met her grandmother before; the whole family didn't understand why he had such a problem with going there. I thought that Jeannette had portrayed her dad in all stages that he had gone through in his life, but he was acting extra weird. He wasn't really talking. He seemed almost scared of his mom. Brian, Jeannette's younger brother seemed to be the closest to his grandmother. Jeannette had her suspicions, and one day, she walked in on the grandmother sewing Brian's pants because they had a hole, but they were still on him, and she was groping him. That's when all the points had connected in my head, and Rex's actions finally made sense. I could finally sympathize with him. In fact, I felt more empathy than anything. He had been sexually harassed as a child, by his own mother who was a pedophile and it impacted him throughout his whole life. He had trauma from it, and he got through his messed up past by drinking his thoughts away. I felt bad for the way I perceived this character as before, because I thought of him as a bad person and undeserving of his family, but really, he kept trying to give his kids a better childhood than he had but struggled with his past.

It's hard to say how this made me grow as a writer; I can't even say that I can relate it to a personal experience of mine, but it made me grow as a reader. I feel like I was judging his character too early without knowing his truth and then that made me realize how I can apply that to not only in my real life, but to reading people based on the events that they've gone through in

their past. Everything affects a person in many ways and can result in various outcomes, forming each person's personality, mindset, and perspective on life.