

KIRKUS REVIEWS

ACCIDENTAL BROTHERS

The Story of Twins Exchanged at Birth and the Power of Nature and Nurture

Author: Nancy L. Segal

Author: Yesika S. Montoya

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The story of a baby-switching case that involved two children who were part of two different sets of identical twins. In December 1988, two women gave premature birth to two pairs of identical twin sons at a Bogotá hospital. One woman came from La Paz, a rural municipality several hours outside the capital; the other came from Bogotá itself. Hospital conditions were chaotic. Nurses often put premature babies together on a single table and used easily removed tags to identify the children. When the women and their sons were finally reunited, each had a boy that belonged to the other. Using information gathered from extensive interviews, Segal (Psychology/California State Univ., Fullerton) and Montoya describe the serendipitous events that led to the reunion of the brothers separated at birth and the effects that reunion had on both families. "Accidental brothers" William and Wilbur grew up in La Paz while their blood brothers Jorge and Carlos grew up in Bogotá. Both mothers accepted the accidental brother in each set as family despite obvious differences in skin color, general appearance, and temperament. Where the La Paz brothers had limited access to education and advancement opportunities, the Bogotá brothers were able to attend college and pursue careers. Drawing on twin study research as well as their own experiences with the brothers, the authors reveal the fascinating dynamics that emerged once each set of identical twins was reunited. Though the revelation shocked everyone, despite individual differences in personality and background, the rapport each true brother had with the other after 25 years of separation was undeniable. Yet the ties developed over more than two decades with other members of each respective family were also profound and remained strong even after the reunion. In exploring the impact that random events can have on personality formation and life chances, this study of the role nature and nurture play in upbringing sheds illuminating light on the meaning of family. **A compellingly readable tale of identity formation.**

8-page b/w photo insert

KATIE BASSEL 646.307.5563 St. Martin's Press 175 Fifth Avenue New York, NY 10010