

'My Mother Was My Sister' — Rejection Letter to a Young Writer (Memoir)

by Rick Rofihe

Most of the short stories that, as an editor, I like, or that, as a writer, I write, seem to be ones where the light's on the protagonist nearly all of the time, and the "supporting cast of characters" are reduced to near-ciphers.

Lately, I've been reflecting that it was my circumstances-of-birth that led me to my isolated-protagonist stance—in 1950 my father was in his 50th year, my mother was 30, my brother was 14 and I was, well, ZERO. That is, as there were four generations where there should have been only two, none of us were proper company in the house for any of the others.

When I was 10 years old in 1960, some people thought that my father was my grandfather, that my brother was my father, and a few even speculated that my mother was my sister!

Beyond that, we lived "above the family store"—which meant that we ate "in shifts", and, whether the store was open or whether it was closed, I don't recall EVER sitting down, all four of us, just the four of us, for a meal.

This has affected me in my tastes in fiction—stories with scenes at parties, in bars, even ones containing the dialogue over any family dinner-table, seem too "crowded with characters" for me to linger there for very long....

