

Is It Too Late to Start Drinking? Dealing with My Parents' Divorce

In this essay, I will discuss my personal life and how my parents' divorce when I was 3 has changed me, along with the impact of my father's way of life on my own.

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ENGL 3130 Fall 2017

Full disclosure: I did not want to write this essay. I am a very private person myself. I never discuss the past because I prefer my dark and sardonic wit over writing openly about the cause for that brand of humor. It is very hard to write about fucked up shit in life, the kind of bleak bluntness that cuts people like a knife. The idea of writing about my parents' divorce and discussing yours truly made me uncomfortable up until 2017, but it never left my mind. Until this year, I have been scared of revisiting old demons by talking about everything. Thankfully, I have gotten more sure of myself and broken my shell, so the idea of sharing is easier. The topic of a divorced child talking about their parents is a cliché in my opinion because I think of someone just bitching about their problems or writing about the easiest idea, yet it made me uncomfortable because it meant sharing a portion of myself with readers. Very soul-bearing shit that I was rather unsure if I was ready to share. It's finally time. I won't use names though instead just Mom and Dad because that is too much sharing for my taste, but you will get the whole gist.

Opening scene: the year was 1988. My mother was a junior in high school at Sullivan North in Kingsport, Tennessee. After fucking up her knee from playing tennis, she decided to go onto school and be a nurse. The profession made sense to her or so she told me because of her kind personality and eyes that feel like a cup of warm tea. Her course in life was mapped out,

that is until she met the poor son of a bitch that is my father. He was the typical bad boy, well, as bad of a guy you can get during the 80's at Sullivan North. He had the curly long hair and that cigarette in his mouth that defied all of the adults. He was a senior when they met, planning on going off to the army and "kicking ass" for all of his worth. As life has it, boy meets girl and my parents spent the year dating. Mother told me she was happy at first, I know that's a load of shit and really being with my dad was a way to rebel against my prude of a grandmother.

Skip forward a year to the June something or other of 1989 when my parents tied the knot and said their "I dos" in a little church like the quaint folk do. They moved off to Germany, some small town outside of Bavaria, shortly after that due to my father being in the army full time. I was told that the newlyweds lived in a small flat above a delightful Italian restaurant. While my father did basic training and his daily drinking with his buddies, my mother was out and about in the town exploring with her new friends. She has since told me of stories of her and others, such as the Texan that taught her to two-step in a bar at 3 am, as they explored the Red-Light District, and how she saw a badass punk that had 5-inch spiked hair. She tells fond memories of the experience of Germany, not so much of the first year of marriage to dear old dad. They moved back to the states to be with family in 1990 or 1991, but they chose to live in Cincinnati, Ohio, due to a job opportunity for father. To this day, that move seems counterintuitive since both sides of the family for my parents still lived in Kingsport, Tennessee at the time of the move.

Stepping forward in time more, mainly because I have little knowledge of the in between years, to 1999. I was a wee lass that fall from where I was only a few months old at the time, bumbling around in the little apartment that overlooked a cute and peaceful pond in Cincinnati as my mom's patience for my father shrank exponentially. She was still learning to be a new mom, all of the tips and tricks, while dad decided to just drink and fuck his way through the city

outside of his day job. Mom did not know until a woman showed up at the apartment shocked to see the lady of the house at home from what she has told me of what caused a lot of the reasoning for divorce. And this incident is what began the descent into hell as I like to call it.

After 3 years of bitching, arguing, and pain, the divorce was finalized in April of 2002 I am fairly certain. I say fairly certain because I do not remember much and I like to keep it that way, not to mention I try not to ask Mom because I know she still gets bothered to this day by what all happened then. Mom was relieved to be rid of the bastard, but dad made it known he was not done causing hell in her life. Divorce is a terrible ordeal, especially if one member is a piece of shit, but things get very complicated when manipulation has to watch out for a child. Dad wanted his visitation with his “precious child” just to make mom suffer his presence more. Of course I did not learn this until years later as I was growing up. He did not care about actually spending time with me, if he did then I would have spent all of my time with him rather being raised by his parents. My paternal grandparents raised me for most of my childhood portions that I spent with Dad which ended up being some throughout the week and every other weekend. Dad never spent time with me and honestly preferred it because he got to do what he missed out on in his twenty’s which was sewing his wild oats.

Throughout my childhood, I have no truly good memories of the schmuck, just ones of mom. He worked a dead-end job at some place, I cannot remember nor do I care to. Mom finally got the chance to go to school, but went for surgical tech rather than nursing so she could spend more time with me in the long run. A surgical tech is the person in the operating room that counts all of the equipment and tools for the surgery while passing the doctor what he or she needs. What her job means is that she works long 12 hour shifts and gets to be normal after 3 o’clock in the afternoon.

Growing up in Kingsport, I remember she would get up so early in the mornings for her shift at the hospital from where she was in surgery, but she did that so she could spend her evenings with me. I hated whenever Mom would have to go in for her shift on call because it meant my mom would leave me. Looking back on that era of life from the point I am at in 2017 as an upcoming sophomore in college, I was a trying little shit of a child. Dad's ways of life certainly did not help it, but Mom really sought to change that behavior out of me. He kept trying to corrupt me, go against the ways that Mom tried so much to instill in me. At one point during my childhood, probably around 10, I remember he tried to get me to dislike my mom completely, telling me that she deliberately kept me from seeing him (really it was the other way around), and saying that she was a terrible person. I guess he tried to keep me from getting closer to her to finally give her the big fuck you finger. Thankfully, I got my head out of the disillusionment, from where I was young and impressionable, that my dad was trying to do well by me. Rebelling against my father, like he likes to think I did, I started to learn what a dick he truly is. This is what caused problems because from where I was a teen at this point of the whole debacle, I was no longer impressionable as when I was growing up.

At this point in 2014, I was a sophomore in high school at Dobyns- Bennett. My dad was enjoying his new life with his new wife, well I say new but they had been married in 2007, and his second child. Born in February on the 9th in 2008, Nancy came into my life three days after my birthday as my new half-sister just to give background info. Back to sophomore year, tensions reached an all-time high. I was constantly arguing with my father because I had grown tired of him manipulating me, and he grew tired of me turning into my mother. We argued so much that I had anxiety problems for the longest time, to the point where I had trust issues with

everyone. I told him I wanted to live with Mom full-time, but this idea did not occur until the end of junior year.

Once I did start to live with mom, my dad started to patronize me even more and not living in his house certainly caused more arguing. I remember phone calls that were so intense that I was shaking afterwards from anger and crying. That was when I decided to start blocking phone calls from family members from my dad's family because they just added to the stress.

Nevertheless, and skipping over that fucked up mess, comes my 18th birthday shortly after that time. I was in college a semester early due to scoring high on exams and I was a computer science major at ETSU at the time. I felt like I was truly in control for once, and I felt free. I was surrounded by people I cared about and was starting to make big life decisions. I had not talked to my dad in 8 months, but he decided to call to be a condescending prick on my birthday on February 6th. I apprehensively picked up the phone because I did not know what to expect.

“Hello?”

“Hey kiddo, it's me. How're you doing?” he gruffed into the phone.

“Oh nothing much, just sitting here working on a paper for a class. What do ya need?” I asked, just ready to end the call so I could relax once more.

“I just wanted to tell you to call and wish your sister a happy birthday because her birthday is in three days, if you happen to remember that,” Dad replied with that sneer in his tone.

Oh no I most certainly forgot my baby sister's birthday being three days after my own is what I really wanted to say. Instead I just rolled my eyes, "Yeah, Dad. I know that fact, I was going to when I got the chance from class."

He scoffed, "I am surprised you can make time for your family being all adult in college. You never come over so I thought you just forgot."

That sentence struck a chord in me that I never felt: bravery in the notion of dealing with Dad. You see up until I turned 18, I could not tell my dad how I felt about him, *truly felt about him*, without having a complete and utter breakdown. The anxiety from arguing with him and the emotional and mental manipulation took a toll on my psyche. Being away from him allowed me to gain strength in myself finally. I then decided to unleash 15 years of pent up emotions back at him and promptly told him I was done dealing with him. I cannot remember what I said during that moment, the only clear image is how relieved I felt afterwards because a weight that was on my shoulders for at least a decade finally left. Two weeks passed by, then another two. After that, I blocked his number from my phone. Now in this time, the only person I will willingly talk to is my baby sister and that is because she has her own phone.

I always answer her phone calls no matter what. I may be a bitch about the rest of that side of my family, but I care about my baby sister. She always asks me to come over, but little does she know the hurt and pain that dear old dad caused me for so long. I never tell her what happened, she is too young to understand. I just try to guide her into being a bright young lady, honestly I am just trying to keep my father's claws out of her fully due to fear of what she would turn into later on in life if I did not try to stop it. I miss her dearly and I know she is the same way. I have not seen her since I started college in January of 2017 because the memories and even the thought of seeing everyone else surrounded by my sister kills me on the inside.

Whenever I talk to her on the phone she says she misses me and tells me what all she is doing. I just hope that she's doing well and being her own self and truly succeeding as well as she can seeing as how toxic my dad can be. I refuse to go back over to that hellhole because I do not want a lecture about never seeing family and only showing up when I want something. I cannot handle seeing them because whenever I run into them like my dad or his sister in public, it causes that familiar tightness in my chest I never wish to have again. Unfortunately, I do not see her anymore due to the outcome of dad's ways with me and it plainly sucks. It's just... how can you explain to a child that you went through hell that damaged you and you worked on so long to fix, so that the idea of seeing the people that caused it shakes you to your core? It's quite simple: you cannot.

I know I come across as a cold asshole that is unfeeling or perhaps a cliché because I am in turn saying "woe is me" about my parents' sham of a marriage. I know I paint my dad as a prick that did terrible things to his family, and he did so I am not excusing that. I also know that I have learned so many lessons from the experience. I am now an English major, a girl that is in a wonderful and healthy relationship, and a daughter that cares about her family for once. All of what I am now is because I learned from my childhood that I need to do things I love and deserve rather than what is expected or right. I learned to be self-sufficient and depend on myself more. I learned to be careful of others, but I also have come to know what truly caring about people means. I now know that I want to very much to be a part of my children's lives, whenever I do decide I want them, and that is from where I do not want anyone to experience what I did. I am... finally healthy, in every way, for once in life. I care about so much more than I ever have. I did not want to write about painful matters because it is hell to revisit those memories, but I

needed to in order to gain some closure. People write about fucked up experiences, and I finally get why.