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## Bisous

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# Bisous

## **Abstract**

A short piece exploring the cynical relationship between a boy and the environment he was raised in. This piece provides a quick glance into how personality traits are created in those who were raised by abusive parents.

## **Keywords**

Childhood, trauma, human condition

## **Disciplines**

Child Psychology | Creative Writing

## **Comments**

Written for ENG 205: Introduction to Creative Writing. Received Third Place for the 2017 Virginia Woolf Essay Prize.

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**Bisous**  
*Elay E. Echavarria*

Here's how it begins: my father gasped and gave a pleasurable birth to me and countless others. We didn't think, we didn't talk, but something in us told our microscopic bodies to swim as fast as we can. A program instilled into our cellular forms inspired us to race one another towards an unseen egg. I was the lucky one; I fused with the egg and became a parasite for nine months. When the time came, my mother gave an unpleasurable birth to me.

I don't recall a thing from my early childhood. I'm told that I was hairless and that I didn't speak very well. In the parts of my youth that I do remember, I spent a large part of it mumbling words that I didn't fully understand. This, I figure, is the root of all my problems.

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I find that people take two things for granted: communication and parental love.

When in elementary school, I was often put into detention. That's cause the kids knew they could bother me, getting away with it since I lacked the ability to verbally explain my anger. Instead, expressed myself physically. I was that kid in class who threw things and screamed loudly.

These situations were the first in which I realized that my parents had a sense of disdain for me. When they received yet another phone call from the assistant principal or saw a letter from a teacher, they reacted much like I did. They would unleash the fiery kiss of a leather belt on my bare thighs without ever explaining what I had done wrong.

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Ironic. A mother and father expecting a child to orally express himself, yet they themselves won't provide an example of what that looks like. Intentionally, I had no reason to believe that this was wrong, until I mentioned to a teacher what was going on. I don't know why I did. I just remember being in a classroom with my first-grade teacher, the school counselor, and the assistant principal;

they were all interrogating me. They told me that they needed to contact my parents, and the next day my parents were also being interrogated. I was present, and being around them opened the possibility that I was a shame to my birth-givers. They lied calmly and convincingly, saying that they did no such thing, that they only took away my television privileges as punishment. I didn't say anything, of course. I started squirming, but my mother gave me a firm glare, causing me to look down at my lap where my hands shook. Mother told the adults in front of her that I had a troubled mind, claiming that I was an attention seeker. Such bullshit. However, back then I didn't even know what that word meant.

The middle stage of childhood is riddled with more leather belt kisses, hours in a corner, writing lines a thousand times, and kneeling on raw rice. In the background was a building resentment towards my parents, as well as a better understanding of the English language. By the time I was nine, I could speak normally. Yet, I never again told a teacher what my parents thought good parenting was. See, it's not just enough to disturb a person's psyche when it comes to my family. The real goal is to manipulate choices. I never tattled again because I'd been convinced the government would kill my parents and force me to live on the streets with criminals. So I powered through, and my childhood concluded with the birth of my little sister.

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Teenagehood was equally as unpleasant as the first decade of existence. What bothered me the most was that my sister was appreciated more. Don't mistake me for being jealous because I think my sister is the best child on the planet. However, it does nag my brain when I think about why my parents choose not to punish her as much as they had for me. Once, they said the truth: she's a girl, so she shouldn't get punished. I find that an outrageous claim. Maybe she shouldn't get physical punishment. Yet, I've had my television privileges taken away for a month regularly

while she had hers taken for two hours. She never had to go to sleep with a sore hand from writing lines or had to sit for days doing nothing.

Despite the unbalanced punishments, there is also the emotional aspects of their relationship that I can clearly see. They hug her, they kiss her, they encourage her to do what she wants. My world with them was sprinkled with second guessing and being shot down for my thoughts. I'd ask them to look at my drawings and they would hardly glance at it, grunting, "Nice."

I'm happy my sister gets the parental support children should receive, but it's still offensive. I understand, I was their first child. The only thing my mother had ever wanted to be was to have a child. And when my parents met, mother 18 and father 21, they fell in love immediately and conceived me by the end of their first year together. I wasn't what they were looking for, I know. They were hoping for a proud Dominican boy who could speak both English and Spanish; they were wishing for a boy who would be bright and perfect and wouldn't be a hassle to raise.

Sorry to disappoint.

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It's the counterfeit personalities that aggravate me. The fact that they can act cheerful in front of friends or family created a lot of bitterness. We frequently had parties when I was a child. Since I was the only child amongst my parent's friends, and all my cousins lived too far away, I spent countless nights staying up late, watching Full House and watching drunken adults stumble pass my bedroom door. Adults always asking me, "How're you feeling?"

I'd just stare back until they left me alone.

The biggest parties were those on November 29, the day I entered the world. It would usually land on the week of Thanksgiving, which meant my parents felt they had to put double

effort in making a fun party. In the night of partying, I was given acknowledgement for five minutes. Drunks would sing the birthday song, I'd blow out the candles, take pictures with family friends I did not like, take my gifts to room, and returned to watching sitcoms.

My parents thought this was appropriate. Make everyone believe that we were the perfect family, only to go back to a household where any excuse is taken to punish me.

You forgot to put the toilet lid down? Go to sleep early (I don't care that it's six).

You forgot to drink water after a meal? No toys.

You got a B on your test? Get an A on the next test if you want to play video games.

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Being a teenager is not a fun time for anyone. Your body is growing too fast for you to get use to. You move around awkwardly on longer legs. Your clothes gets small, your arms feel heavier, and you start wanting to explore. Suddenly, friendships become hard to find, and if you had controlling parents you realized that you are not living.

In New York City, we apply to college the same way we apply to high school. There's a lot of papers, you go to interviews, and you get picked based on financial status, GPA, and race. I was accepted to a high school in the Lower East Side, which was a fifty-minute train ride away from my apartment in the Bronx. My parents almost made me not go simply because I would have to travel by myself, despite the fact that I was a city kid raised in the hood. I know how to get around and I know how to keep myself out of trouble. But they didn't care for that.

Somehow I was allowed to go, and I was happy. Not because I was the first kid ever in my school district to go to my high school's district, but because the travel time to school allowed almost two hours extra that I didn't have to be at home. Meant two more hours to avoid, as Wally Lamb would put it, the house of repression.

There were still annoying ways that my parents ruined my day, the biggest being the curfew they established. I had exactly one hour to get home after school. Which meant every week I would get in trouble at least twice because the train would come late, which meant I would come late. However, it wasn't super late; literally, I would be late by two minutes. My parents were the personification of hyperbole. I cannot count the number of times when the train would arrive at my station at 4:28 and I would run to get home, arrive at 4:31, and be told that my TV would be taken away a day for every minute I came late. I couldn't play sports and for two years couldn't go to after school programs because of this curfew. Not to mention that when I got home I was told that I had to choose: listen to music for an hour or watch TV for an hour. Also, I had to be in bed by ten.

I tried to get out, but any argument on my part resulted in broken things. Cracked phones, messed up computers, and smashed DVDs were commonplace. The rules rarely changed. A paradox formed when I was ridiculed for not having a job at sixteen or not having enough friends. They wanted to plan my whole life. My mother had the audacity to say that she expects two children from me and a phone call every day after I move out. I laughed at her. My father expects me to find jobs, though he is the same person who said finding a job for young people is way harder now than it was in his youth.

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Love is a creature I know. I could give a long rant why I think it exists, or amuse you with the tale of how I met the woman who will likely be my wife. However, I won't. I will say this one thing about love: it does not have to be given to people because of circumstances.

Just because a doctor gave you a new heart doesn't mean you must love them.

If a waiter serves you your favorite dish, it also doesn't mean you must love them.

Birth-givers don't have to love their offspring completely.

Offspring don't have to say I love you if they received more hatred than affection.

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So, what now, since I'm in college? I have slight peace. School has always been something I used to escape my life, so this extended stay is very much appreciated. I don't contact my parents unless I have to tell them when I'm coming back to the apartment. In NYC, I must be home by seven or there will be arguing. Here I am, the whipped child, the good grades student, the alcohol and drug hater, the responsible cynic, still being treated like I'm not an adult.

I currently don't have the keys to my home. My parents think I'm going to take a two-hour bus ride, be on an Amtrak train for four hours, and on a NYC train for an hour in order to sneak into the house when they're on vacation.

I don't watch TV.

I don't want kids.

I don't drink or party or smoke.

If I miss a homework assignment, I get anxiety.

I get sleepy earlier than most people.

I'm careful about who I say, "I love you," to.

I taught myself piano so I could listen to music, alone, in the high school band room.

I always put the toilet seat down.

I'm seldom late for plans.

I have an unnatural hatred for leather belts.

You'll never see me wearing one.