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## An Adult of Divorce

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## An Adult of Divorce

### **Author Bio**

Jared Richardson is a junior Cinema and Media Studies and German Studies double major. He grew up in Vermont--also referred to frequently as South Canada--and plans to work in the film industry.

## An Adult of Divorce

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Growing up, the main basis that most people have for relationships comes from two places: first, the portrayals on television and movies that are simultaneously idolized, idyllic, and utterly ridiculous. The guy (who is a little bit too forward) always gets the girl and they live happily ever after with two kids in the countryside; naturally, if that were true, our society would be somehow even more misogynistic and patriarchal. The second place is from our parents.

When I was a kid, I never realized the influence that my parents would have on me. They had married very young—my father was 25 and my mother was going on 21—and I was born roughly two years after that. Pictures of the three of us fill the photo albums we have locked away in storage somewhere. I was a well-behaved child, which is a habit I have managed to keep to this day. My brothers were born later and three kids can certainly be stressful, but my family managed to hold itself together well. My dad picked up some extra shifts so that we could afford our new house and, when we were old enough to go to school, my mom managed to get a day job in retail. It was not an ideal situation and we never had an incredible amount of money, but we got by as well as we could.

As easy as I was to raise, my brothers were not so. As soon as I could work and drive, my parents did not have to worry about me whatsoever. I always had steady, full-time employment from then on out and I was toward the top of my class. I handled college applications myself and designed my own trips to see my prospects. I was athletic and fit, a solid writer, and managed to juggle everything like a circus clown in a business suit. My brothers lacked that fire of motivation that burned in my stomach. Between all of my parents' own work, they still made time to go out to dinner themselves. They thought my brothers could figure everything out. I did my best to help them decide what to do and where to go, but they were a bit too focused on the Internet and marijuana. When I left for college, my dad cried on the car ride home.

In that first year while I was gone, my brothers managed to figure everything out. One went into the military, which may not have been the most popular decision with my mom but he enjoys it. The other went to college for a semester and worked while on probationary acceptance. The only downside to that acceptance was that—when he was found with a box of weed in his room—they kicked him out. He became a full-time kitchen worker, gave up on school, and I cannot even talk to him without feeling disgusted. He has a hat that says “Thank You For Being a Slut.” When I was with my girlfriend for over a year, he asked me if I thought she was crazy yet. The problem child becomes a problematic adult.

My mom got a job offer across the country after my dad got a new position in his company. He had gotten better hours and benefits for less pay, but he promised to help her move out there and come along as everything wound down. She left in February and my dad sold our house quickly; he did not need a home like that for himself and two cats. I promised him that I would return for the summer to help him move everything to a smaller apartment for the transition.

The move was quick. My brother was back from basic training to help as well, so it only lasted about three hours. Everything that was too large was put into storage or given away to charity. I spent the summer at work and helping my dad. My brother had to leave; he was stationed in Japan for the next three years and given limited leave. The more problematic brother was not very involved anymore; he was never a fan of criticism. My dad never let him smoke weed in the house and he took that the wrong way.

One day I got off work early and was sitting in the apartment. My dad came home slightly later. He looked disheveled and upset. I asked him if everything was okay. All that he said was that it was not, and that I should ask my mom instead. When I left for a little while, I called my mom, nervous that someone had died. Instead, she mentioned that she was enjoying her time alone more than she thought she would.

They separated about a month later. I do not know if they will ever get back together. I still don't know why it happened.

I avoid the topic with my brothers whenever I talk to them; it is a sort of a mutual understanding. We all kind of grew closer, almost out of necessity. I find it hard to talk to my mom sometimes, even though I know she must have her reasons. It can be really hard to stay unbiased when you sit up awake at night because your dad is too, trying to cry quietly. I do my best to avoid bringing up their relationship with either of them. For a while, just thinking about my mom would bring tears to my dad's eyes.

My grandmother had similar issues with her first husband. Whenever I talk with her to check in on my dad, she mentions how hard it must be. She tells me that I should know "It isn't my fault." I never really considered that it could be, to be honest. I talk to my girlfriend about it sometimes, too, and she tends to ask if I am alright. I always say yes, but the real answer is that I cannot tell what I am.

Growing up, the main basis for relationships I had was my parents. They fell in love young, had a successful marriage and raised three kids. They may not have been overly wealthy, but they loved each other. Looking at my friends who had divorced parents, I was very glad that my parents had a wonderful romantic relationship. They teased each other, they kissed frequently, and they would always hold hands when we drove anywhere. People have asked me if this whole process has made me question my own relationship.

No: it has not. I am not a child of divorce; I am smart enough to know what love is and what it is not. My parents did love each other—they likely still do—and I know that they would never take back the past twenty-one years. My girlfriend and I love each other, but that does not mean it will fade away like it has with my mom and dad. The main benefit that I have over my friends back then is that I have my own adult opinions. My own relationship is different. I know this is not my fault. I know that things change, but that they do not have to. Right now, I do not have the time to think about it and what it means. Instead, I will help take care of my family. That is all that I can do.