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Perception Of Love: Eloise Palandro

My parents were divorced by the time I turned four years old. Now don't pity me. This story isn't meant to be pitied. It's a story of growth, and change and of realizing that your parent's love for each other (or lack thereof) doesn't affect their love for you.

I don't really remember what went down when my dad and mom told my sister (lucy) and me about the divorce. What I do remember is that they sat us down on the couch, and then they said something along the lines of:

"Mommy and daddy are getting a divorce." Granted I was 3 and Lucy was 5 so we didn't have the keenest knowledge on divorce. So we probably asked about divorce and they went on and explained and then said this,

"We still love the both of you though. That will never change." It hadn't even crossed my mind that that was something that could happen, so I automatically went into panic mode. Just because they said something doesn't mean it was true, or that they would stick to it. They used to say "I love you" to each other and clearly, that wasn't the truth anymore. Because maybe they *didn't* love me anymore. What if my sister or I *were* the reason for the divorce?

I had probably just turned four when my dad moved out. He didn't move far, a few blocks away from our house into an apartment building for the time being. It was a tiny apartment. You would walk into the kitchen. It was such a tiny kitchen. Then there was the living room/bedroom. My dad had moved the furniture so that the couch was facing the bed and the bed was facing the couch (duh), then past that was the bathroom which I don't remember, but you can just assume it was also extremely tiny. Now Lucy and I never slept over at that apartment. There were two reasons behind that, one: there simply wasn't enough room, and two: I didn't want to. I found comfort in my home. The home where all my good memories with my mom *and* dad were. And so we just didn't sleepover. But then my dad met someone. Her name was Sarah and they are married now. When he first introduced me and my sister to her I liked her. But not as a mom and not as a stepmom. Not yet. Sarah meant that my parents weren't gonna kiss and makeup. Sarah brought the end to them. Now I'm not painting Sarah as a villain. Because she isn't. I love Sarah.

In 2012, my dad and Sarah moved in together. They bought a house in South Philly. Now there was no reason for me and Lucy to not spend nights there. We had our own room. But it still felt *wrong*. I've always been close with my mom. I got so anxious and upset even just thinking about sleeping in a whole other house then her that I got really bad separation anxiety.

One of my main memories would be my mom, Lucy, and me sitting in the car outside my dad and Sarah's house. The whole car ride over I had been bouncing my legs and pulling at my fingers. Then when we parked I finally snapped and started crying. My mom got really worried. It took me a minute or two to calm down before I could actually form clear sentences. I explained how I didn't want to leave home and stay with her. But then she explained to me how everything would be ok. And how sometimes change is good. She told me how much my dad loves me, and that I would see her soon.

After that, I felt better, still a little anxious (that doesn't just go away). I stayed in the car and wiped the tears from my face. I didn't want my dad to think it was his fault. Because it wasn't.

I'm not magically fixed now though.I look forward to going to my dad's house, but I still look forward to going back to my mom's. I've never asked the reason behind their divorce, because I don't feel that constant itch in my brain that makes me constantly wonder about it. I know my parents love me. And my perception of love hasn't changed because my parents stopped loving each other. It just wasn't right for them. I'm just glad I got to experience it for a little while.

ARTIST STATEMENT

Some ways that Noah's memoir influenced me include the way that he wrote as if he was talking to a friend he'd known his whole life rather than a billion people he'd never met. I didn't want my memoir to sound like a story I am telling a college administrator as a way for them to accept me into their college, but to a friend who actually asked me to talk.

Noah had been accepted into many different cultures, due to his skin color, ability to speak multiple languages, and just his overall personality. He just never felt he truly belonged to any of them for the longest time. Because being accepted isn't belonging. This vignette I wrote was more about me getting used to a new culture I now belong in.

I really liked how in Noah's memoir he would be telling a story and then go off into a little tangent about something that almost had nothing to do with the original story he was telling. I tried to copy that throughout little portions of my memoir because I think that makes the

whole thing easier to read. And like I said before I think that adds to the effect of writing as if you are just talking to a friend.

I tried to explain having divorced parents as best I could. This is difficult because the way I experienced it is different than how everyone else with divorced parents experiences it. I even experienced it differently than my sister. It's hard because everyone reacts to it differently. I was lucky because my parents got divorced when I was really young. For most of my life, My parents haven't been together and that makes it easier to get used to it.

Having divorced parents isn't really a part of me. It's a fact. It's a way I can connect to people. But it isn't me. It doesn't make me who I am. Because I didn't let it?. I haven't let it change my thoughts on relationships or love because your parent's love life won't be your own.