

The Critic

My father was a critic. Not as a job, but as an attitude in life. It drove my mother crazy, but as children we thought it was kind of interesting and later on it became funny, for me at least.

There are three of us. Myself, being the youngest, my brother and our older sister. Looking back, I think I enjoyed my father's rants the most. When I was young, I never fully understood what it all was about, it was just fascinating to see him getting worked up about something. And when he was "on", I could watch him all day, gesturing, snorting, exclaiming. My brother never cared about it. He just shrugged his shoulders and went on playing or doing whatever he was doing at the moment. And my sister, as the sensible oldest, mostly did not appreciate the constant stream of words my father spewed when he was annoyed. I guess when you are the oldest child, you indeed should be grown up about these things. Like my mother, my sister's attitude towards our father was something of a silent disapproval.

I remember one day when he was reading a book of short stories. It was an anthology and as is often the case, there were good stories and there were bad stories in the book. Instead of accepting that, my father started to get irritated with every page he turned. You always could see from a mile off when an eruption would follow. I was playing in a corner of the living room at the time and when I noticed the rising tension, I put my toys away and settled myself comfortably, waiting for what would follow.

He put the book down on the table and grabbed his forehead with his hand. Slowly, he looked up and let his hand slide to his cheek in exasperation. A long sigh followed. Then his hand suddenly banged on the table and he cried: "Oh, come on! You got to be kidding me. You call this a story?" He picked up the book and held it up, showing it to no one in particular. "When you are an editor assembling a book with short stories, you can at least be knowledgeable on what a good story is! Is that too little to ask?" Then my father noticed I was looking at him and he turned to me. "This editor sucks, son", he said in a serious tone. I nodded, enjoying myself immensely.