


# The Confinement of My Home



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*“We have to build things that we want to see accomplished, in life and in our country.... to make sure that others do not suffer the same discrimination.” ~  
Patty Mink*

# Table of Contents

Introduction.....	4
Home.....	5
By: Alexe Morris	
I Hope.....	6
By: Alexe Morris	
Sweet Release.....	7
By: Jessica Pearse	
Oppression's Recipe.....	8
By: Jessica Pearse	
Father.....	9
By: Sarah Smith	
Just A Question.....	11
By: Abishagi Obiero	
Intertwined.....	12
By: Abishagi Obiero	
Father and Son Numbness.....	13
By: Nathan Marchi	
Citations.....	15

## *Introduction – A Problem To Us All*

The poems and creative nonfiction pieces in this chapbook were made with facts, many sources, and some have our own, individual opinions. We felt that tackling the topic of toxic masculinity was important as it is such a pressing issue in contemporary society. Not only is this construct crucial, but so are the side effects that come from this destructive ideal. The overall mental health and oppression of women in society is something we cannot sweep under the rug – these are real issues that stem from toxic masculinity. We understand that we are no experts, and that this topic can be heavy at times, but we hope that our creative works can shine some light on toxic masculinity and the effects it carries.

Toxic masculinity refers to a box, a label, a set of characteristics that supposedly makeup men and their actions. Toxic masculinity emphasizes societal conformity on established masculine tendencies. The reason that it is toxic is because it is basically a set of actions and characteristics that men are supposed to do or have in order to truly be a man. This construct is not only toxic for men, but also to those around them – women. Due to toxic masculinity, women must live and deal with the consequences of their counterparts, and if this behavior continues, our society will remain the same – destructive and traditional. This specific concept has made it so that both men and women are stereotyped by their gender.

Nowadays, toxic masculinity can easily be found online as this concept has been adopted by the users of many social media platforms. Due to this, the spread of toxic masculinity happens rapidly – the implantation of negative gender stereotypes can happen in the blink of an eye. This causes people to be afraid of stepping out of those specific labels, of not fitting into the box that was created out of stereotypes, and eventually, to be afraid of being themselves. With this fear and belittlement due to toxic masculinity, the mental health of most men has changed, which has created detrimental effects for both men and women.

# Home

It's the night time  
The time that you choose  
To either go out or reside  
In the confinement of my home

You choose to stay  
And You lay down on my bed  
Letting the day fall on you

You recollect your thoughts  
You recognize your actions  
You choose not to reconsider them

You do not cry at the end of the day  
Unless it is in the shower  
Where your tears and your doubts can  
Run along with the water that flows  
From the top of your head  
To the sole of your feet

I look down in defeat again,  
As You see your reflection in the water.  
I wonder why you must be like this,  
But then I remember...

You are a man

# I HOPE

As a woman I want to ask

I want to ask if you  
Wake up feeling the need  
To be rude to others,  
To be aggressive with others.

To dominate others,  
Especially women.  
To be homophobic,  
To be a misogynist.

To be honest,  
I don't think that you do.  
Actually, I hope that you  
Don't wake up that way.

I hope that you wake up  
Happy to see another day.  
Maybe yesterday was not  
A good day, but you are  
Confident that today will be.

Being realistic,  
I hope that you wake up  
Disoriented, you know.  
Like everybody else does.  
Confused at why this  
Shrilling noise is in your ear.

I hope that you eat well  
And that you try to take care of  
The others that are around you.  
You don't have to be optimistic,  
To be positive.

I hope that you have a good day  
That you get to go to sleep  
Happy, just like you woke up

I hope that you respect all,  
Because I respect you.  
Be a Sunshine  
In somebody's' gray sky.

# Sweet Release



Break the barrier.  
Toxic, manly confinement  
**God, I want release.**



Release from this hell -  
A hell on the mortal world,  
But how do I leave?

Leave the harsh pressures  
That curse myself and others -  
Society's curse.

Let me be a man  
That does not follow the "norm"  
**Please, I want release.**

Catcalls that linger in the air, =

Sour sounds to the ears.

Late night walks to the car

Sharp keys held tight for self defense.

Hindered opportunities based on gender alone

Quite distasteful if you ask me.

Disregarding women's opinions

As their fiery emotions supposedly get in the way of their work.

Miscarriages that wind you up in jail

Repulsive abortion laws that control bodies.

Throw in a dash of "slut" and "whore"

It's quite acidic to self image - don't add too much.

A sprinkle of 81 cents for every dollar

It's a tart reminder that women must work harder to be equal.

Date rape and roofed drinks

For a bitter taste to wake up to.

Dress codes that enforce girls to cover up

A watered down way to tell girls they're being sexualized.

Add a fistful of power dynamics

Be careful it doesn't morph into that fist - abusive.

A hint of manipulation -

Only a bit or else it's a red flag.

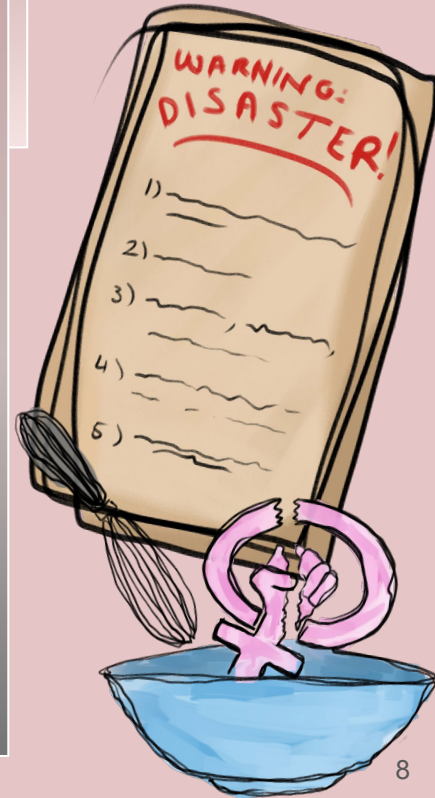
But 'boys will be boys'

And women must learn how to avoid their ways.

Now this is a recipe for disaster

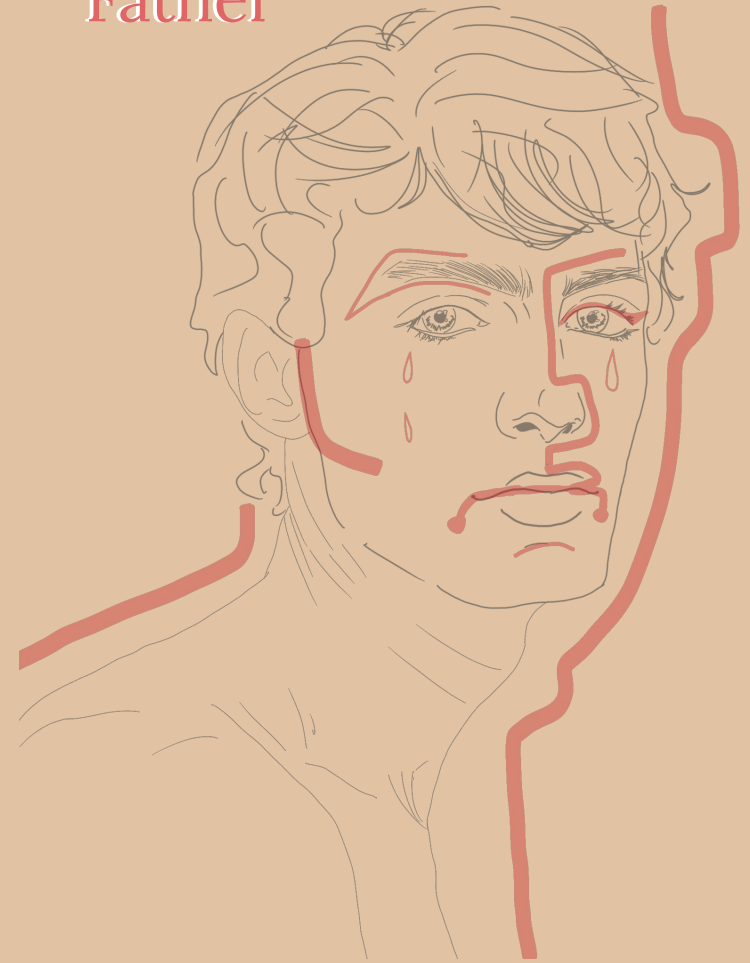
It's the recipe of oppression.

## Oppression's Recipe





# Father



My father was born into toxic masculinity. He was born into a family with a military dad who ingrained the lessons of “boys will be boys” and that crying is for girls into my father’s head like it was going to be on a test. He was born into women being weak; the idea that feminine traits make you fragile. He was born into bottling his emotions and only letting them come out through anger. He was born into a home where the toxic ideals of vulnerability being weak were the pillars that the men of the household were brought up on. These antiquated notions of what makes a man, can make a man spend his entire life trying to unlearn them.

I see some of it in him still. When he asks my mother why *she* hasn’t washed the dress shirt he wanted, why dinner isn’t ready when he comes home. The way he taught me to fear crying in front of others, the way he told me to “man up” when I did. The way that I can count on one hand the number of times I’ve seen him cry throughout my entire life. These are traits and concepts that aren’t with us from birth, they are taught. They are taught by parents who mimic and make fun of tears instead of talking you through them. They are taught by parents who prioritize discipline and respect through fear tactics instead of building a true relationship. They are taught by a society that, to this day, continues to define gender based upon actions rather than accepting that a man can like pink and a woman can eat a dinner prepared by her husband.

My father is someone who was affected greatly by not only by his upbringing but by the world taking place around him. While the ideas of being a “real man” were being instilled upon his young and impressionable ears, he was watching TV shows of hopeless women being saved by strong heroic men, seeing the way his father’s friends engaged with their wives, seeing the way his mother was expected to take care of everything within his house while his father was only expected to bring home money. These conversations with his dad and the image of a role model he was seeing at home and in the movies shaped his idea of how a man should act. His ideas of what a woman’s place is. This is the issue of toxic masculinity - these ideas begin to be taught at a young age and are reinforced by everything around them. There is no way to break out of these cages unless a problem is recognized, and you actively want to make a change. The problem is, with everything continuing to confirm these ideals, it’s hard to detect the problem.

To this day, though, I see the way his upbringing affects him. He still is crazy about money and feels he is inadequate when he can't afford to pay for a car outright or for my sister and me to go to school. When he is hurt or upset, and instead of talking it out or letting himself be sad, he descends into anger, itching to start a fight so he can put his emotions somewhere. The way that he sometimes expects my mother to use her days off to complete the household chores *he* thinks need to be done.

When toxic ideas of masculinity are so ingrained in our everyday lives, and it is portrayed as how a boy knows he's a man, it's hard to tell right from wrong. It's hard to unlearn these actions you see all of your peers completing. It's difficult to teach yourself something that no one else you know has been taught. It continues to affect you and those around for a lifetime, even long after you're gone. These are learned traits, traits that trap you and confine you, that causes you to act in ways that you can't even explain. It's like you're in a house with only one window open. You let everyone look at you through this one, tiny window. You could unlock the door. You could let everybody in, but you've been taught time and time again that letting people in makes you weak. That letting people in makes the floorboards creak and the foundation rot. That letting people see more than what they can through that window will be the thing to make the roof collapse.



I think throughout my life I have seen my dad open that door. Every once and a while when he does it surprises me. I wish he would more often, I can't imagine how hard it gets in that house all alone sometimes, but I also know how hard it must be to undo the lock. So, for now, I just wait outside, hoping that as he continues to grow older and continues to see how beneficial opening this door would be for him, he'll let me inside more often.

# Just A Question

Waking up every day with a smile concealing  
What I currently feel about my world  
When I stumble upon an inequality  
Based on any gender  
And I ask myself,  
Am I safe?

Not only myself but also  
Other young people who go through  
Anguish they shouldn't go through.  
Both young boys and girls.  
So I ask myself,  
Are they safe?

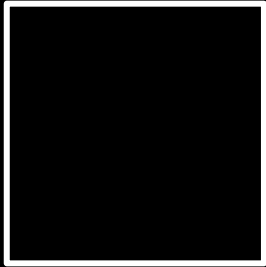
Crushed, misplaced, and shunned emotions,  
Labelled as "boys don't cry".  
Constantly fostering unhealthy behavior,  
Termed as "boys will be boys".  
And I ask myself,  
Are males safe?

From female infanticide and genital mutilation,  
Early forced marriages and denial of education,  
To female inheritance laws and sexual harassment,  
Gender-based violence and discrimination in job areas,  
So I ask myself,  
Are females safe?

Suicide cases on the rise  
Mental illness and depression off the charts  
Physical torture prevailing  
Because of this archaic system  
And I ask myself,  
Are we safe?

I repeatedly ask myself,  
Am I safe?  
Are they safe?  
Are males safe?  
Are females safe?  
Are we safe?

Is it safe?



view of masculinity

as revolutionary or inspirational.


Should

intone the best in men

But insidious producing some misogynist women culture is

that could be harmful to men.

boys don't cry



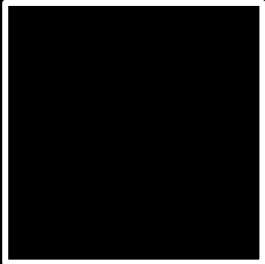
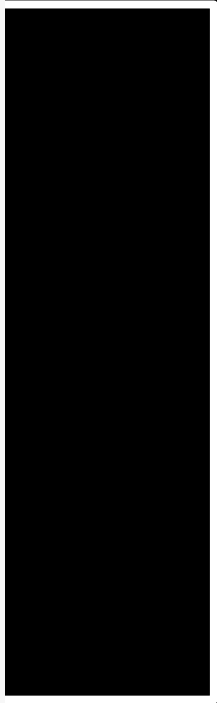
created the poison of

problem. why toxic masculinity is a societal problem, not just an XY chromosome

"Boys will be boys"

harms girls by making them think unwanted attention is their fault, and it harms boys by making them think that harassment and affection are the same thing.

we have to figure out a way to deal with both the men and the women propping them up.



## Father and Son Numbness

I come from a household where nothing is given, everything must be earned. Due to this mindset that I've lived with my whole life, I learned that nobody is going to pity me for any reason, so I learned that it was in my best interest and everyone else's to never show negative emotion. I've been told that I need to show more emotion in situations, but it's hard to switch my mental lifestyle after 18 years of the same continuous thing. I know that how I react to things have pushed people out of my life, people that I cared about, but it's how I was brought up by my parents, especially my dad. As long as I can remember, my dad always tried to instill the "being a man" mentality in me. I wasn't allowed to cry around him for a period of time with any repercussions and whenever I felt pain, I had to walk it off. I understand if people think this isn't a healthy way to raise your kid, but he raised me the way his parents raised him and his 5 siblings. He tells stories of how he rarely cried in front of his parents and how he tried to "out-man" his 2 brothers. That's how he was, and that's how he still is. 18 years of life for me and I've seen my father cry 3 times. Him and I have both fell into the "suppression of emotion" narrative that society has placed on us.

Toxic masculinity has been around for quite some time and it affects many men and women. Society has placed very unfair stereotypes on men for them to follow so they can “be a man.” Personally, I have some experiences with being put under these stereotypes. I can recall when I was younger, whenever I fell down or injured myself in any way, I was always told to not cry because “big boys don’t cry.” That mentality has stuck in my head ever since, and now whenever I get an injury, no matter how much it hurts, I feel obligated to shrug it off like it was nothing because I don’t want anybody to see me as weak. Another stereotype that’s been placed onto men that contributes to the idea of toxic masculinity is that men shouldn’t show any emotion or be emotional. I’ve experienced this as well. Whenever I cried at times that I would deem appropriate to cry or be emotional, I was told to stop crying even though plenty of other people were. It’s come to the point in my life that people rarely see me cry because I feel numb when it comes to being emotional.

Much of toxic masculinity is society telling men that they have to suppress their emotions to ensure that they don’t show signs of “weakness,” and it affects their mental health. A very recent memory I have of this idea was when I got my feelings toward a girl played with. Any person would qualify this experience as a good time to be sad or show emotion, but I was just numb. I didn’t show any emotion about it then and I still haven’t 6 months later because I’m supposed to “be a man” about it and take it in stride. These kinds of things aren’t healthy for the mental health of men.

The suppression of emotions can lead to depression down the line or even lashing out violently at others just to let your emotions out. Both of these aren’t good for society as a whole. Luckily, it hasn’t become that extreme in my life and I won’t let it get to that point, but many men are affected by this and have become depressed. “Being a man” shouldn’t have side effects, and even if it did, the side effects shouldn’t be negative.

# Citations

Hesse, Monica. "How should conversations about toxic masculinity deal with the toxic women who also perpetuate it?" *Washington Post*, 18 Jan. 2019. *Gale General OneFile*, [https://link-gale-com.ezproxysuf.flo.org/apps/doc/A570081607/ITOF?u=mclin\\_b\\_suffuniv&sid=ITOF&xid=58bd7d58](https://link-gale-com.ezproxysuf.flo.org/apps/doc/A570081607/ITOF?u=mclin_b_suffuniv&sid=ITOF&xid=58bd7d58). Accessed 18 Aug. 2020.