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The Bad *But* and its Entourage

Of the many forms that the word *but* can take, one is that of a conjunction; according to the dictionary, this *but* may be replaced by “except for the fact.” Sounds harmless, right? *But*, I say, *but* really IS the fact. A girl never lied to her boyfriend, *but* she did not tell him about her lovers. A sixth-grader never bullied her classmates, *but* she stood by when her friends did. A president did not have sex with that woman. *But . . .?*

Another dictionary will say that *but* “introduces something in contrast or unexpected.” I say, whatever comes before the *but* is only there to soften what is hidden behind it; it is just a preparation for the cold, hard truth of the *but* and its tail of words. A woman loves her husband and kids, *but* she left them and never looked back. A police officer assured a couple that their sons had driven safely, *but* the driver of the truck they were rammed by had not.

The *but* attempts to make sense of contradictions; it unites what does not match. An athlete never touched a cigarette, *but* he died of lung cancer. The *but* makes the way for people to deliver good and bad in one package. Someone might tell you, “I think you’re great.” Let’s start with the good news, right? “*But* you’re not my type.” Ouch.

The *but* seeks out your personality flaws. He is a great friend, *but* he is self-conscious and shy. She is cool and all, *but* she talks too much. The *but* catches your physical flaws. He is charming, *but* he still gets pimples at 25 years of age. She is pretty, *but* her nose whistles when she laughs. When we become aware of our *buts*, they stay put in our mind. A *but* can be a crooked nose, an inability to say you’re sorry, or an undeveloped chest. What is your *but*? My

but is my butt, but my *but* is nothing *but* a butt. A *but* can be much worse. A *but* can be an organ you need to survive. If your *but* is a sick heart, it doesn't matter what can be before that *but*. If your *but* is a mean heart, there is nothing on the other side.

The *but* sneaks its way in to start off the bad part of a sentence. The *but* sneaks its way into relationships and health. The *but* changes body images and comes between friends. The *but* is the delivery man of what you didn't want to hear.

Why don't we fire *but* and replace him with *and*. I love my boyfriend, *but* he snores and always has bad breath in the morning. Not good. Not true. I love my boyfriend, *and* he snores and always has bad breath in the morning. Why don't we stop before the *but*, and decide that we will live without it. I love my boyfriend. I will say what every mother in the world has said at some point when she asks her kid once again to clean up his room, and he is halfway through the *but*. "There is no *but*!"