

## Unreachable

It happened near here, the crash near my school. Three years ago, the summer that changed my life forever. I walk by that place everyday, constantly reminded of the sorrow that is the backdrop of my life.

I'm Chloe, and I go to JFK Middle School here in Nowhere, Louisiana. It's the first week of classes and I am already sick of it. It's a large school with lots of kids, most of whom I have never met. Being an average girl with average looks and average grades in middle school, especially mine, is no easy task. All the girls in my class are obsessed with hair and clothes, which isn't bad and all, it's just not for me. I'm shy by nature, but now that everyone knows what happened that summer, I keep to myself even more. I can't stand the pity.

I haven't felt like myself since the summer my mother got into that car crash. She was left in a coma, and hasn't woken up since. My mother is still alive but the doctors think she doesn't have much time left considering she hasn't eaten much food and is growing ever more thin. I live with my dad and two little brothers, Gabe and Micheal. Neither of them remember mom much and I'm afraid they won't get to see her again. I'm grateful that I have many memories with her, but I'm sad to have lost three years of life with her.

We are tight on money nowadays mostly because of the hospital bills that seem to be endless. My dad is almost never home anymore. He is always at work, or so he says. I think he met someone. Who can blame him? His wife is in a coma and she hasn't spoken to him in years. But I mean, come on.

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It's finally the weekend, and I could not be more relieved to have a break. I have a ton of homework but I know I won't do it until the very last minute like I always do. A new medical bill from the hospital came in the mail today. They are always dreaded. I didn't see it myself but I could hear my dad cursing under his breath as he opened the envelope. Mother's room at the hospital isn't cheap and we are feeling the pressure.

As we are eating dinner tonight (leftovers from a few nights ago - not great), I look at my dad and see worry on his face. I ask him what is wrong. He sits completely still and the room goes quiet. Gabe and Michal stop laughing and messing around with their food. There is an eerie silence. At last he speaks only to announce that he is seeing someone and that we will meet her the following evening. The silence is so loud it can be cut with a knife. Then Gabe asks, "Will she be our new mommy?" I immediately choke up with anger and stand so abruptly that the chair I am sitting on falls with a bang. I practically yell my response, "We already have a mom!" I am mad at my father for betraying mom like this. I knew he had someone, but to bring her into our lives is unacceptable. I storm out and lock myself in the room for the rest of the night.

I hoped my dad would change his mind about the whole thing, but the next evening he comes knocking at my door and tells me to get ready to go out to dinner. I don't want to go, but he makes me. I reluctantly get ready. I can't stop thinking about how my mother would feel if she knew. I can feel the anxiety creeping in my chest. As I head down stairs, I grab my mother's favorite locket and put it on to remember her.

We get to the restaurant and I am surprised when a woman with pearls and jewels walks over and hugs my dad. I look away because the sadness of the whole thing is overwhelming. Besides that, I feel underdressed. We are at the fanciest restaurant in town and the cheapest thing on the menu is \$20. I am surprised that we brought Gabe and Michael to such a nice place. I am concerned about how much everything will cost in the end.

At the table, I try not to make eye contact with her. Her name is Lacey, (what kind of name is that?), and she is nice enough. In the end, she pays for everything. I wonder if she knows about our mother, and I decide to find out. In the parking lot I ask, "Lacey, you know our mother is in a coma, right?" She nods and replies sadly, "Yes, I heard about her." Then she says the most surprising thing yet. "You know, after I marry your father next month, I'm going to be your new mother." I am so shocked I don't move. I look at my dad who stands there,

stupefied. I don't say anything after that. God, I am so mad at my father! I can't believe he is engaged and didn't even think to tell us.

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It's been a month since the first time we met Lacey. She moved in and I like her enough. I don't love her and I certainly won't call her mom - EVER. Tomorrow is the wedding. The boys have gotten used to her and even call her mom. I hate that they do. It feels like we are betraying our real mom. I don't sleep well knowing what awaits me in the morning.

I wake up and get ready to face Lacey and her white dress and my father who is so in love. The wedding goes off without a hitch. I feel utterly sad. I don't hate Lacey anymore and I'm not mad at my dad, but I still do not approve of their relationship. Gabe and Michael like her, so I guess I have to accept it.

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It has been a week since the wedding and I'm home alone when someone knocks on the door. I open it expecting our mail man but standing before me is a woman. I don't recognize her and for a moment I just stare. Then it clicks. It's her. I hug my mom so tightly. She looks so different, tired and thin. I am full of great joy and thankfulness, but my stomach tightens knowing there is devastating news to come. I look at her not wanting to tell her about dad. We talk and I am careful to stay away from the fact dad got remarried. But eventually he will come home; he will have to make a very hard decision.