Okay

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I'm not doing anything in particular or of great importance when she calls that evening. It was (and still is) quite a habit of mine to waste away a lot of time on my computer. I'm sure I'll do more worthwhile things in the future. At least she wasn't interrupting anything with her call. I was actually quite happy about it. Since I had moved away from home for my year as a trainee dancer in Palm Beach, I was most often the one calling home to my mom, so it was a nice surprise for it to happen the other way around. So I do what anyone is supposed to do when their phone rings, and I answer.

“Hi Momma!”
“Hi honey, how are you?”
“Pretty good, just chillin’.”

This exchange goes on for some time. I babble on and on about the company when she asks, because I'm good at talking, and I don't have many people to talk to down here. (A sample from my end: “It isn't too bad, but I'm still getting used to things. Yes I'm sure I'll be able to see myself improving soon. Oh yeah! There was this great guest choreographer one week, but now we are starting Peter and the Wolf and I'm not sure how I feel about swaying in the back as the meadow like a kid in a school play.”)

Well apparently the catching up part can't last forever, and mom decided that it was time she had to get serious. “Hey honey, I've got something to tell you. I didn't want to tell you over the phone but I didn't want to wait either.”

She's waiting for my response. I've moved to sit on my bed, and I had my laptop open in front of me. I fiddled with the mouse a bit before responding. “Of course, Momma, what's up?”

“It can't be anything bad right? Maybe it's something about my car. Or maybe something happened at work? But then that wouldn't really concern me. Unless it is bad? Oh crap. Please don't be bad. Please let it just be some mom worry thing that isn't really bad. And with that inner monologue over, she drops the bomb on me, no lead in, nothing.

“Alex and I are getting a divorce.”
“Ooh. Okay.” And that's all I really had to say.
Contrary to my initial reaction, I really couldn’t say I was surprised. The writing had been on the wall for a while now. A few months ago I was told they were getting separate apartments when I moved down here. The reasoning sounded good, if a little forced. Mom knew a coworker who had a great arrangement with her husband; they both worked better when they lived separately most of the time. They visited each other on weekends, and they were happy. And it was this way for more people than you might think! Well at the time I wasn’t even thinking about their situation, or if I was it was completely replaced with other factors. To me, it meant the first home we had lived in, the first non-apartment we had together, was getting left behind. After two years I could actually call that place home, and now it would be gone.

They ended up three doors down from each other in the same apartment complex. And then they told me they started dating (each other) again. Dating each other? I guess so? I told Momma it made sense when she explained it. Something about needing to get some time away and fall in love with him again? Something about the separate apartments being good because it would force Alex to work more, and that would help me in the long run living in Palm Beach. Something about dating again being a good thing. Nothing about them already being married, and a bit past the dating part.

Momma’s saying something else to me. “I really did want to tell you in person but you needed to know and I wasn’t sure when I was going to see you again. Things are going to be okay though, you know that right? Alex still loves you and wants to see you. And we are okay too. We both just realized we didn’t love each other the same way anymore, and that it wasn’t working. So this is a good thing. Okay?”

“Yeah, it’s okay Momma.”

Why would she even ask me if it was okay? What does okay even mean? That’s a dumb question. They’ve been married for nine years. Nearly a decade, but it’s over now. Ironically, I have thought about what it would be like to grow up with just Momma. If I admitted it to myself, I’d say sometimes I had wished for it. But not like this. It was too late now. Too late for them to decide it wasn’t going to work. I was just out of high school, they’ve moved out, I lost a grandmother last year, Alex’s mom. Things weren’t supposed to fall apart like this.

She’s saying something else.

“Thank you for understanding. I just have one more thing before I let you go alright?”

“Yeah, sure Mom.”

“Can you please not tell your nana about this?” Her mom. I can already guess why. “I know what she is going to say, and I don’t want her disissing Alex or talking bad about him or saying anything to lecture me or
anything like that.” Bingo, give me a prize. “I’m writing her an email, and I’m going to tell her not to say anything to me or to you about it. I don’t need that from her right now, and it wouldn’t be fair to you either. Okay? Just promise me you won’t say anything to her, I’ll handle it.”

It wouldn’t be fair to me. Ha. That’s so funny.

“Okay Momma, don’t worry. I figured you might say something like that.”

“Thanks baby.” Baby? I didn’t know at the time but she starts calling me this sometimes here on out. Weird. “I’m going to go now but I’ll call you soon okay? I love you.”

“Love you too Momma.”

And we hang up. I don’t remember who hits the red button first. But the hitting of the button means the end of the conversation. And the end of the conversation means the thoughts in my head, once held back to focus on said conversation, are given free reign.

First things first: Mom and Alex are getting a divorce. Okay. This is what’s happening, nothing to get sad about.

Second: Well this is kinda funny.

Of course there really wasn’t anything funny about it, at the time or now. But really, when you looked at it, when you looked at what my family had become, it was pretty interesting. My mom never married my dad. She hated her father and had no hesitation in giving me my father’s last name, as opposed to hers, her maiden name. I’m not even a year old when she leaves him, and for good reason (though I hate hearing about it. That was them, and it has nothing to do with me).

Momma brings Alex into my life when I’m very young, four perhaps? I’m not sure. He’s been there even longer maybe. She used to tell me she only introduced him to me once she was sure he would be good. (Sure? Were you?) My parents (even now I still slip up and say that. I suppose it still is true though?) Get married when I’m nine. The wedding is happy, and I’m happy, and I don’t know if I thought anything of it at the time.

It’s not until I’m a teenager that Alex legally adopts me. This was mostly my dad’s fault, but now I have an official stepdad. I still call him Alex, because that’s what I’ve always called him. It wasn’t a big deal at any time. I only started referring to him as ‘my dad’ a couple of years ago to avoid confusion with friends and company who didn’t understand yet.

I remember my elementary teachers used to write home to my mom using ‘Ms. Morrison’. I used to get a kick out of the fact that for a while, we all had different last names. Morrison, Fazio, and De Castro was from Alex. But Momma hated her name, and when she could, though it was some time after the wedding, she took on Alex’s. She kept it when they divorced too. I’ve asked her about it, but she likes it. Their separation brings her no pain, and she likes this name much better. I’m glad she got something lasting out of
it. I don’t know what Alex thinks of her having his name; He knows her story, so maybe he doesn’t mind. Maybe only I think it’s significant. But I do know that the separation did bring him pain, and I don’t think he’s over it even now.

I still have a stepdad. Alex is still my legal father. I also have a biological father, who I call Dad because I always did. And I call Dad sometimes, and I see him sometimes. It’s like that with Alex now, too. The way I see them is similar now (but also nowhere near the same).

Momma is still Momma. Of course, she didn’t seem like herself for a while after the divorce. Not because of the divorce itself, but because of her new boyfriend. She lives with him now, and that’s where my ‘home’ is now, when I leave for breaks from college. He was a little too perfect when I first met him, and she texted him a little too much when I went to visit her. Seeing a new romance was weird. Seeing Alex freeze up when I mention Momma is weird. But it’s fine now. It’s even okay. I think I might hate the word ‘okay’.