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My Mother is Quiet

My mother is fighting with my step-dad. There are a million things they could be fighting about, but my mom is crying, she ordered Chinese food, and the driveway is icy. She wants me to come with her, and I sit in the passenger seat of her car as she stands outside fighting with Vinny.

“Maybe I’ll just fucking die going down our driveway,” she yells at him. “Maybe the car will flip and I’ll die, then you can do whatever you want!”

She sits in the driver’s seat, turns on the car, and rolls down the window so she can keep yelling at Vinny. The whole time, I’m looking at the icy driveway, crying, because I know there’s a chance the car will crash down it and kill us.

My mom is threatening to kill herself, and take me with her. “We both don’t like you,” she tells Vinny. “We’d be happier if we were dead, and we wouldn’t have to deal with you.”

I scream and cry at her, “I don’t want to die!” I unbuckle my seat belt and try to open the passenger door, but she locks it, and hits me for trying to get away from her.

“We’ll be fine, don’t be such a fucking baby,” she screams at me. I keep trying to open the door, I don’t want to go down the driveway, I don’t want to die.

She’s locked me in the car, created a murder-suicide pact that ends in her killing herself and killing me— except she wants to die, and I’m forced to come along for the ride.

As she yells out the window, the car peels off, and starts going slowly down the driveway, away from Vinny. My mom is crying, her eyes are closed, she's silently pleading with some god and I'm screaming and trying to open the door and save myself. It's icy, the car keeps going down and my mom's foot isn't on the pedal. We don't speed up, though. The car stays straight, and after the worst minute of my life, we've made it down the driveway.

Then, as if nothing happened, my mom drives down the road to pick up the chinese food.

She doesn't try driving back up the driveway. Instead, she parks at the bottom of it, and we walk up. She walks on top of the snow to the right side of the driveway, and I walk on the left side.

When we get inside, we all sit down as a family to eat. Vinny at the head of the table, my mom to his right, the kids all to the left. My mom didn't try to kill herself and me twenty minutes ago. We will never talk about this night again, any of us, because it is easier to forget about it than discuss it.

My mother did not want to teach me how to drive. Learning to drive is hard: You're expected to know a lot, but you can only practice on the road, and there is little room for error next to lifted pick-ups and buses going double the speed limit.

With my mom in the passenger seat, I stop at a two way intersection, my goal to get from one side to the other. There was a big old road between my street and the one I face. I'm looking both ways, it isn't safe for me to drive, but my mom mutters, "Just go already," under her breath.

So I go. Then she screams, and I slam on the breaks. I would have been smashed by a 16-wheeler, who honks in annoyance at me and continues on his way. "Roll it back, NOW!" My mom yells at me, and I reverse back to the stop sign to try the whole thing again.

“Why did you tell me to go?” I ask her, shaking.

“I was talking to the other car,” she responds.

My mother does many things while she drives. She texts and yells at her passengers, but she does not talk to other cars. When she said “Just go already,” it was directed at me. Was it to get us killed? Was it an excuse to call me a bad driver and stop me from getting my license?

She never drove with me again. My step dad taught me everything I know, brought me to five different test sites until I passed, and was the only one who congratulated me without backhanded comments.

When I got my car, I learned how expensive insurance is when you’re an 18 year old male driver. My mother begrudgingly put me on her insurance plan, but charged me \$350 a month for it.

Four months later, I got a speeding ticket for going 93 miles an hour on a 65 limit highway. I was definitely going faster than that, but the cop took it easy on me because I was a first time offender and very polite.

A special safety course put me back \$400 but took the offense entirely off my record. I was eligible for it because I wasn’t going over 30 over, and my license and criminal record was saved thanks to that officer.

Still, I didn’t want to stay on my mom’s insurance plan and potentially raise her rates with my speeding violations. I ended up finding my own insurance plan where, with a ‘good student discount,’ I paid just \$87 dollars a month for decent coverage.

I did have a college student discount, and insurance rates were lowered after the COVID-19 pandemic, but \$87 is a huge jump from \$350. Maybe the insurance company was impressed

by my six months of driving, or maybe my mom was just grossly overcharging me and taking my money.

My mother was always desperate for money, but I didn't know why until the day I got kidnapped. I was 14. That day, my mom was trying to instigate me into a fight. She walked into my room and randomly started calling me names. She said my room was dirty, and I was a loser and a slob. She held her fists up, on her face sat a stranger's nasty eyes. I had never seen her like that before, and it was scary.

As she raised her voice at me and stepped closer with her hands up, I ignored the bait and averted my eyes from her. When she couldn't aggravate a fight from me, she left my room. Then, I ran like hell to the downstairs apartment where my Nana lived so that I could tell on my mom to the one adult with authority over her.

It so happened that my Nana was leaving for a secret meeting at the mall with the other women of my family to talk about my mom's behavior, and my mom's confrontation with me was icing on the cake for other recent altercations.

In the mall food court with a grease burger in hand, I found out that my mom had a miscarriage. This was hard to believe, as her tubes had been tied a long time ago, and she was going through early-age menopause.

But she was lying about a lot of things. Her nausea and sickness wasn't menopause, she was pregnant. She had gotten her tubes untied. It turns out she was funneling large amounts of family money into secret bank accounts, which she turned around to untie her tubes, forge my step dad's signature at the sperm bank to get his sperm, buy another woman's egg, then get the mixture put into herself so that she could have another child without anyone knowing.

And she gave me trouble about having a dirty room?

My mom was content with her four children— My older brother Luke, myself, my little sister Gianna, and my youngest brother Vincent, — for years. But that all changed as we started to grow up. Luke, three years older than me, graduated from high school and moved away from my mom, into my Nana's downstairs apartment. He had a rocky relationship with my mom, and as he grew older, he wanted independence from her. I was maturing, too, and spent more time outside of the house than in. Gianna was turning into a rebellious teenager who only listened to her dad, Vinny, and little Vincent was growing up fast.

Why wouldn't my mom want another child? She had Luke when she was 19, and motherhood was all she knew. Us kids were growing distant from her, realizing she wasn't the best mother, and we were beginning to take Vinny's side in their frequent arguments.

Another kid meant that her life could stay easy. A new child to take care of, a new era of motherhood. Life was simpler for her when her children were young and lovable, and she wanted to go back to that time. Her children were her one thing in life, and she was losing us. If having another kid meant emptying the bank accounts, stealing from other family members, and forging sperm bank signatures, it was worth it.

Money, signatures, it was all just paper and ink. It wasn't real. It wasn't the same as a child.

And after all her work, she miscarried. She was completely alone, with nobody to confide in. At one of the worst moments in her entire life, she couldn't tell anyone about it. Not Vinny, whose signature she forged, not her family, whose money she took. Certainly not us kids, who didn't know about any of this and certainly wouldn't be on board with having another sibling to take care of.

It was hard for me to sympathize with her at the time. None of my family did, especially when she called me while I was at the food court. My Nana and Aunts stopped talking, everyone was silent, looking at the phone in my hand. My eyes filled up with fear, but with a go-ahead nod from Nana, I answered the call.

Instantly, my ears were filled with a high pitched, maniacal screech. I dropped my phone on the table, and Aunt Stephanie switched it to speaker mode.

“YOU LITTLE SHIT, HOW DARE YOU RUN OFF WITH NANA WITHOUT TELLING ME? I KNOW YOU’RE THERE, STACY AND STEPHANIE. YOU’RE ALL TALKING ABOUT ME, AREN’T YOU? AND YOU’RE WITH THEM AIDAN, YOU’RE ATTACKING ME TOO BECAUSE YOU WERE MAD AT ME THIS MORNING?”

I stuttered as I tried to respond to her. Everyone’s eyes were wide and filled with guilt. Nana tried to calm my mother down, but she wasn’t having it.

“I’ll be filing a police report,” my mother raged. “You kidnapped my child and brought him to the mall. I didn’t give you permission!”

Then she changed gears from Nana back to me. She called me every name in the book, shouting at the top of her lungs. Aunt Stephanie picked up the phone and hung up on her mid-scream, and shut it off completely.

“Can she really call the cops?” Stephanie asked.

“I don’t know,” Nana said. “I just don’t know.”

My mom didn't call the cops, but she did decide that my trip to the mall with Nana was a kidnapping. It didn't win her any sympathy from the family, and they didn't want me to go back to her house. I moved in with my Nana for a month, and the whole family kept talking about how bad they felt for me. Apparently, they knew that I was my mother's least favorite, and had seen that favoritism play out throughout my entire life, even when I didn't realize it.

"She wouldn't have yelled at any of the other children like that, no matter what," Aunt Stephanie told me.

So my mom was at the lowest point in her life, I discovered that I was her least favorite, and the family was breaking apart. Slowly, my mom started reaching out to family members, trying to fix things. She couldn't give them back their money, but she could be honest about what she did with it.

Honesty was all my family needed. Soon they were on talking terms with her again, and I was moved back in with my mom.

Why haven't I ever gotten honesty? After that night on the icy driveway where my mom nearly killed us both, we silently agreed never to talk about it. After threatening to call the cops on my Nana for kidnapping me, things cooled down, and we never talked about that either. My mom was going through serious mental trouble during both situations, and I never got to understand it. Even when she was taking extra money from me for insurance, she was surely going through something.

Our last fights were a long time ago, and I permanently moved out years ago, cutting contact with her at the same time. I'm old enough to consider her perspective, and understand her pain, but I'm young enough to believe I don't ever want to talk to her again. I'm scared to talk

about the past, to apologize, to be sympathetic. I would rather pretend nothing ever happened, and erase the memories I'm not proud of. I am just like my mother, who never talked to me about the icy driveway, mall, car insurance, or everything else that transpired between us.

Did my mom block those situations from her mind? Was she scared to talk to me about them, to reignite the flames of the arguments?

I will never ask her.