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Author: Arielle Dreher

**Water under the Bridge**

My life has never been “normal” unless you count traveling on an airplane by myself at age six normal, or having four parents normal, or having four siblings in two different cities normal. Unfortunately in the world today, divorce is very normal. Divorce rips a family in half, and the only way to relate a story of divorce correctly is to be in the middle of one.

My parents split when I was one and a half years old. Yes, I don’t really remember much of my first year of life except one scene in our little apartment in Edmonds, Washington. I remember hearing my mom and dad arguing about something. I was sitting on a bed clinging to my favorite stuffed cougar. The next memories play out scenes of me with my mom in Seattle, me with my mom’s friends waiting for her to be done broadcasting a gymnastics meet, me with my dad in our apartment, me with Dad at his mom’s house.

This routine was the easy part.

My mom moved to the Tri-Cities when I was three. She took me with her. I met my soon to be step-dad. I still saw my dad every other weekend, but I could tell that life would never be the same again. My mom got custody of me so I lived in the Tri-Cities while my dad still lived in Seattle. Traveling back and forth became a part of life. Not to say that I didn’t like visiting dad or mom; it actually became a habit. The people at the airport knew me, and I always got those little young pilot wing pins. I was always asked by flight attendants if I needed *anything* when really I was quite alright. I got used to waiting on the airplane by myself until everyone got off; then the friendly or sometimes not so friendly flight attendant would come and retrieve me. Life became a pattern of back and forth.

My dad remarried when I was eight. My mom and step dad had a child. My dad and step mom had a girl. And then twin boys.

Now, with two families in place, life should be somewhat normal. Except now I am a sophomore in high school, and I play two sports and participate in various activities. My friends are suddenly an important part of my life as well as family. I can barely visit dad anymore. I get to see him maybe once a month. Not just my dad, but my twin brothers and sister. I miss Elizabeth, my ambitious four year old sister. I miss my twin brothers, Luke and Jake, who are just now starting to walk. Unfortunately, in my situation I would have to drive 243 miles just to see them. I am missing seeing my brothers grow up into toddlers. I will not be able to give Elizabeth advice when she gets into elementary school or help her with homework. I am missing growing up with my siblings in Seattle. I am the oldest by far; the next oldest sibling, Lexor is twelve. I wish I could have grown up with a family, but instead I grew up with two families. I never stay in the same place for too long; divorce has caused a constant moving in my life. I miss out on some things that "normal" kids wouldn't have to miss like: birthday parties, slumber parties, and games. Everyone makes a sacrifice for me even though I never asked for it. Missing something or someone is a part of my life; this pattern of a broken family should not be someone's problem ever.

Marriage vows need to become unbreakable or close to it. Should the law say that once you marry someone you really are stuck? A law like this might not be fair in an abusive relationship, but divorce should not become the easy answer to marital problems. Perhaps the real issue goes down to the state government. If the state required marital counseling before couples get a marriage license, divorce rates might go down, or the state could enforce counseling before a couple issued for a divorce. Either way, the divorce rates would go down.

Divorce will never be eliminated from the average American lifestyle. In today's world, divorce is another dilemma that has become water under the bridge of life. Life goes on some say, but does it?

Not easily.

Most people who are getting a divorce don't realize the impact it will have on their children. Even if both people move on and get remarried and have kids with their new spouses, their families will all be affected. The new siblings will miss the divorced child when they are gone. Someone is always missing that one kid. In my life, it's me.

I will never have a "normal" family. Where will I take my kids when I am older? Kids, do you want to see Grandpa and Step-grandma or Grandma and step-grandpa? What if my husband is from a divorced family? The problems divorce causes never stop. Even after two generations have gone by, the remains of divorce show. When I have a family, where will we go for Christmas? During the summer, where will I send my kids to visit? There will be no way to visit one family without offending the other family. The one thing I have learned in my life is: you can never please everyone.

Most kids in the middle of a divorce are more likely to get a divorce themselves. I will not get married in a hurry because the cost of a divorce is too high to pay as I have found out. I have learned from my parents' mistake, and divorce is not an easy mistake to fix.