

## INFORMATIVE—EXPLANATORY

**The Stuffed Iguana**

Silent tears crept down my face as I clutched my stuffed Iguana—sure, it only had one eye, but what wasn't broken these days? I was approximately two years old, but I remember this clearly now. My mother and father were screaming. I didn't know that the ear-splitting sounds they were emitting weren't meant for me; I didn't know that they hadn't a clue I was hiding behind the counter. I only knew anger. The term 'divorce' meant nothing to me, yet. Although, in the years that followed, the word became one I grew quite familiar with.

My parents divorced when I was almost three years old, and from then on I assumed everyone's mom and dad lived in different houses. I finally figured it out when I went to my friend's houses. Some of their parents would spit out the word 'divorce' as if it were a dirty word. Don't get sympathetic yet, though because my parents both found new people less than a year after the split—way to give it time to settle in, right? The new stepdad, to be called 'Daddy' until I was ten, was named Ray. My dad didn't actually marry his young new girlfriend, Judy, but she was my stepmom, no less.

My two sisters are only a couple years older than me; Lauren is three years older while Carmen only exceeds me by one. Carmen and Lauren stopped seeing my father when I was eleven. Lauren deems it Judy's fault while Carmen seems to have

issues with my dad. Honestly, though? I think they both stopped seeing him because that was what my mom wanted. I used to ask my family not to talk badly about my dad when they were around me, but they usually just laughed at me so now I just ignore it. Don't get me wrong, my dad and I have nowhere close to a healthy relationship, but I could say the exact same for my mother.

Four-year-old Jaxon is my half-brother. I love him with a regretful heart because I only see him once a week. This is not because I don't wish to see my family; it's only because—for a reason unknown by anyone but him—my dad stopped picking up on Tuesdays too. I don't visit on weekends because something social is usually occupying my time as a thirteen year old—yes, I realize how selfish I am. I feel horrible, too, because what's going to happen when Jaxon is old enough to realize I was just across the highway all this time? Hopefully, I'll get kudos for at least seeing him; it's more than my sisters do.

Like the stuffed iguana—and my family, for that matter—I am broken. I still have the beaten down creature and like to look at it once in a while. Its name was and always will be Iggy—original, no? Actually, I'm pretty sure it's a chameleon, but I don't think it matters because I know for sure that it is like me. A gaping hole fills the space where something important should be.