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An Open Letter to Lonely Caregivers and Parents

You weren't invited.

Again.

They just decided not to call..or maybe they didn't even remember you at all.

Then, you saw the photos on Facebook, the Instagram Story, or heard them laughing at an inside joke from the other day when you passed them at school drop-off.

Maybe they even left you out on purpose.

You've heard all the lines...

- *"We just didn't think you'd be able to join us..."*
- *"You have so much on your plate, I didn't want to bother you..."*
- *"I didn't even know you liked doing _____..."*
- *"Oh! So and so was supposed to invite you, I'm so sorry!"*
- *"We'll do it again and make sure you can be there, promise!"*
- *"Shoot, I wish you'd have been there. Well, let's just get the kids together soon, ok?"*

You smile your well-rehearsed "understanding smile," and put politicians to shame with the canned response of, "No problem...let's do it another time!" They might even respond with an even more canned smile, and a breathy "Absolutely!"

But, it cuts deeper every time.

Because both of you know "another time" is a fantasy land that doesn't really exist. And their momentary awkward guilt doesn't hold a candle to your years and years of invisibility.

They might look at you, but they don't really see you.

Sometimes, they might even ask how you are, while really hoping you don't respond with the truth.

Hell, it's not like you chose for your child to be diagnosed or your suddenly ill parent to be thrust into your care and need just about every ounce of love, attention, care, and time you have. Yet, here you are. You love them more than language even has the words to express. You would give your last breath to know they had everything they need. You do it willingly and faithfully. You've rearranged your entire life, all your dreams and ambitions, and plans for the future because this is who you are now, and there's no one who can care for them better than you.

It's just...you're lonely.

Dating and marriage were the first relationships to be reshaped. For some of you, those aspects may be gone indefinitely.

Friendships were another potentially even more devastating casualty. We all need "our people," the core we can depend on, the core who can depend on us. As difficult as it is to admit, we want to be in those Facebook photos sometimes, or to make a silly Boomerang on Instagram every once in a while. Because that means we were invited. We were remembered. Even for just a few minutes, we were able to inhale different air, have a damn adult conversation that didn't include medical jargon or crisis management.

For just a little bit, reminded what it feels like to belong.

You spend all your days and nights making sure those in your care are safe, loved, heard, embraced, and invited...and sometimes you need to feel that too.

You don't need a production or huge soirée, just a friend.

A friend who sees you hears you, proves to you that your life circumstances don't confine you to a destiny of loneliness.

This open letter won't magically fix everything, patch your open wounds, and make all right with the world. It's just to remind you that you are not invisible. You are worth so much more than you know or remember. Your dreams and hopes are still real, even if you've set them aside for now. This open letter is just to remind you the world needs you, just like your son or daughter, mother or father, spouse or

significant other.

The calling of Caregiver is spectacularly demanding, not always visibly rewarding, and often a journey with more solitude than any of us could ever anticipate. But, your work, your love, YOU are not journeying in vain.

Thank you for giving of yourself when so many easier paths could have been taken.

Thank you for the sleepless nights and exhausting days.

Thank you for serving and sacrificing even when you had nothing left to give.

Thank you for seeing the beauty, value, and humanity in your struggling child or ailing parent when the world looked the other way.

Thank you for teaching us all what love really looks like.

You are not invisible.

Don't give up.

Do you know a lonely parent or caregiver? Share this letter with them.

Better yet, be their friend.

- Matthew Chambers, Springible Co-Founder and CEO

Springible is a solutions based, consumer-driven, lifestyle platform for caregivers, and people living with disability, special needs, and chronic illness.

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