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The Bullying I Couldn’t Live Without

Sitting in the seating area of a hotel we were staying at for my 15th birthday party is a memory that I think about from time to time. Analyzing it used to make me angry but recalling on it now, I feel a sense of bitter sweetness and even some hidden love and grief. A couple of my birthday parties growing up were held at the local Holiday Inn. I always thought it was the coolest thing; a big inside pool, game area, elevators and even a bar that I would order virgin Shirley temples from when the bartender was feeling generous. I recall sitting around with some new people I had met that day; it was difficult for me to make friends during my younger years so I was feeling really happy to be around people who wanted to get to know me. Ten minutes into the conversation my older sister, Taylor walks by. “Miranda is a bitch; I don't know why you guys like her.” My initial reaction wasn’t anger; I felt embarrassed and sad. I did also feel like she made herself look like the stupid one and not I. My new friends brushed it off and asked me about why my sister would say something so mean to me. They assumed that we must've just gotten into a fight to cause that reaction but that wasn’t the case. I didn’t think much into it growing up, it just was a part of being each other's sister.

Taylor is 13 months older than me and she made that known growing up. Almost all of my core memories with her are evolved around fights and hatred. Instances of rivalry and bullying were very frequent in the household. I don’t want to make it seem as if I was an angel because I definitely was not but it really did feel instigated by her most of the time. It affected my self-esteem and self-worth in a very negative way. Which was the last thing I needed with the initial abandonment from our parents. I believe it was the only way she knew how to cope from the abandonment and I’m oddly grateful for the reaction she chose because she became a huge distraction from my parents. So much so that I didn’t even notice them; my main focus was Taylor. Even with the bullying and hatred between us I looked up to her. She was always there, regardless of choice. To think of a life without her is terrifying, being a single child with my parents I feel like I wouldn’t even know I existed at all.

One way of bullying that really affected my self-esteem the most was when she would hang out with her older friends and they would gossip and make fun of me together. It was always instigated by Taylor but once that some of her friends saw it was okay, they’d join in and laugh. Thankfully not all of her friends wanted to treat me that way and sometimes some would even stand up for me or try and do something to help me feel a part of the group.

I know I’m not describing my sister as a likeable character but she truly is just that. She is such a continuous happy energy and light in people's lives, even mine. In my life now, she has such a vital and powerful part in my healing journey. She is a consistent source of stability and comfort for me. After the death of my boyfriend at age 21, our relationship finally took a turn from hate and irritability to support and care, something I desperately needed at that time in my life. Her hate has turned into concern with the same level of force.

Not all memories growing up together are negative. I recall a time when the both of us were flying alone to visit our grandpa in Texas. Growing up, I had always had very sensitive ears and airplanes were painful for me, as my ears would throb the whole flight. I cried most of the way and she held me, allowing me to lay on her shoulder. Something that I never experienced with mom or dad. I felt a connection with her then, that she understood my pain and didn’t want me to feel so alone.

Taylor currently lives 8 hours away and when I ponder on that, grief fills my throat. I feel more attached to my sister than my own parents. Having gone through the same experiences growing up, it has given us a deep connection in our early twenties that I think we both wouldn’t want to live without. I call her when I’m sad and message her when I have questions to ask about the things we experienced together. Although she has not always been my favorite person, she is the closest person I’ve had in my life. I know as the younger sister, she's supposed to be the protective one and she is, but my sense of protection for her is the same feeling of protection I get when I think of my daughter.

What kind of relationship do you have with your sibling; has it changed over the years? Is there more support and love or less? It makes me wonder whether relationships with siblings are sometimes more vital in our early adult years than our parents. Maybe this person closer to your age, having witnessed and gone through the same major life experiences as you, seems more supportive in a time of beginning adulthood. Maybe that’s just my personal perspective because of the lack of parental guidance I have had in my life. Having friends grow up with siblings, I witnessed a lot of the same rivalry between the two and into the present I am able to see that their relationships have changed. Having become much closer and protective of one another. I know growing up, I always wished I didn’t have a sister at all. Thinking of her, always brought up anger. I think it's silly and also interesting that being so young, we can believe in these things that aren’t even true at all. If I had the same thoughts of introspection at that age as I do now, I would realize that Taylor meant more to me than all of the people in my life growing up. She was and always will be the annoying, mean gift I didn’t know I needed.

I forgive my sister for the way she treated me. If I had the chance to go back in time to our younger years, I would run up to her, hug her and tell her I feel that pain too. If that’s what she needed to do to cope with the pain of it all, it's okay. In some ways I think it opened up a deeper level of connection between the both of us, something I am grateful for now as an adult.