The One

Being the oldest child of a family is completely underappreciated. The punishments are always harsher and the parents excruciatingly less understanding. One has to blindly leap into the cruel social world, timid and vulnerable, without a trail of precedent actions and examples to lead her way. The youngest sibling, however, receives a far easier script in life. After carefully observing the mistakes of the oldest sibling, the younger child pretty much has it made. The youngest child knows that when sneaking a boy home at one AM to turn off the car headlights before the house is in sight so as not to stir the slumbering parents. Only a youngest child will quickly realize her first few weeks of freshman year in high school that the guidance counselor’s secretary possesses a never-ending stash of late passes. She knows not to ever take a shot of Southern Comfort immediately followed by a shot of Tequila. Basically, each and every baby of the family is born with a get out of jail free card in her mouth. This is why I would like to think that many of my little sister’s successes stem from me.

Lauren is pretty much the perfect student. Her list of accomplishments include: placement in the top five grade point averages her class, captain of the tennis team, president of the environmental club, yearbook staff, etc. Now, I must admit that I too was a fairly good student. I held my place in the National Honor Society. Yet when I look back to my days of high school I often remember getting sent to the back of the room for talking too much or to the principal’s office for my display of short skirts. I don’t remember ever getting any “Congratulations! It’s Monday and we felt like giving you some random award because it’s been over a week since you received your last one” awards. Maybe that is a bit of an
exaggeration, but it seems that each time I come home a new invitation for yet another awards ceremony in honor of one of my sister’s many achievements lies on our kitchen island.

A few weekends ago my sister won a scholastic silver key for a photography assignment she shot in art class. Her work captures the curiosity and idiosyncrasies of nature that most completely disregard. In this way I envy her eye for precision and beauty. This particular photo portrayed a barrel of apples in the middle of an orchard. She used a special photography paper paint to add some color to a few of the apples against the black and white contrast of the photography paper. I did not attend the ceremony, but I hear it was quite the ritzy event. Immediately afterwards she called me on her cell phone. As I sat in my sweatpants painting my toenails and watching a rerun of “Everybody Love Raymond”, she recalled to me through her muffled hysterical laughter that as the presenters called each artist’s name to come forward the Olympic theme song music played in the background. She informed me that there were not, however, any torch carriers leading her down the aisle or medals hung around the winners’ necks. That might have been a bit over the top. Nonetheless, only Lauren would attend an event with such regal proportions.

As much as I mock my sister’s nerdy little existence, I truly am proud of her. She graduates in the spring and I cannot believe it. I won’t believe it until I have to. With senior year comes senior prom; obviously one of the most overrated but also memorable events of one’s high school career. Over my Spring break, Lauren and I took a nice little road trip down the Pennsylvania Turnpike to visit the King of Prussia mall in search of a prom dress. Lauren does not take fashion lightly. For being such an academic princess, she has an excellent sense of style. Shoes remain her biggest weakness, followed closely by her love affair with purses. She remains very passionate about what she likes and she remains even more passionate about what
she dislikes. With this said, Lauren will never settle for the ordinary. The entire drive down Lauren kept referring to her future prom dress as “the one”. “It just has to be ‘the one’ Katelyn”. “When I see it I will know it’s ‘the one’”. Therefore, prom dress shopping with Lauren is kind of similar to the search for a suitable husband.

I love to shop, but I hate malls. I would rather be stuck on the Schuylkill during the middle of rush hour than be stranded in a mall for over two hours. My sister does not seem to possess the same negative relationship with malls that I do. As soon as we entered through the doors of Nordstrom’s Department store, her game face was on. We hit up Macy’s, Strawbridge’s, JC Penny’s, and Neiman Marcus right away. Unfortunately, we did not find “the one”. After taking a much needed break at the food court to replenish our weary bodies, we decided to head to Jessica McClintock’s next.

Being a Wednesday afternoon, the store was not overly crowded. Thank God. We made our way over to a rack with mountains of fabrics in deep purples and lush greens, two colors that Lauren felt held potential. Soon afterwards, I pointed out a refreshing champagne colored strapless dress that I thought looked elegant. Lauren pulled it off the rack and we escaped to a dressing room. A vintage looking lace design enveloped her torso as she slipped the dress on. The bottom of the dress, in much contrast to its lacy top, flowed outward like a buttery wave of golden sparkles. Immediately, I knew it was “the one”.

It’s funny how moments sometimes jump up on you like goosebumps on one’s arm after getting a chill or the recognition of cold childhood winter day of sledding after a waft of hot chocolate hits the nose. When I saw my sister in that dress, looking amazingly beautiful and grown up, I saw our childhood. It brought me back to when we would pretend we were orphan sisters named Summer and Autumn, and would camp out in our backyard between the pine trees.
It made me remember the times we would record ourselves on a cassette player enacting a made up radio talk show that we called “The Lauren Bailey Talk Show”. However, to this day it still upsets me that her name was in the title rather than mine, seeing as how I am the older sister. That’s Lauren though, bossy and in control. It made me love the fact that on the entire ride down to the mall we choreographed routines of hand motions and dance moves to “The Killer’s” album.

I love it when Lauren sends me random text messages during class with one of our favorite “Sex and the City” quotes in it. I love it how she gets so flustered when I drive us anywhere because I almost always end up getting us lost wherever we intend to go. I miss her smartass comments when I am away at school. She is the one who was there with me while my parents got divorced and when my grandpa died. When I look back on times that she’s made fun of me for tearing up over some silly Hallmark Commercial I laugh. I find it hysterical that a freshman girl from Lauren’s tennis team told her at the end of the season that she was scared of Lauren because she tends to get a bit “angry” when she messes up a shot. I don’t think anyone has ever been scared of me in my life. I love how different we are, yet how well we mesh.

On April 22nd Lauren will attend her senior prom in her stunning gown. I will take the train back home to Mechanicsburg to be there for the big event. I know “the one” will look gorgeous on her. Graduation day will follow shortly. Sometimes it scares me how quickly life flies by. Growing up remains one of the scariest and exhilarating processes within life. It comforts me though looking back on the slow smooth rhythm of my memories. My sister is my memory. My sister is my other half. She complements me more than anyone else I know. My weaknesses are her strengths. She is my childhood. Having a sister has been one of the only
constant stabilities within my life. She is the one that makes me feel ready for the future even when I am scared to death. I love her for that. I love her for everything.