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The Paradox in What's Lost

There are friendships that begin in elementary school and you think they are going to last forever. You have that one little experience that brings you both together to create that sisterly bond you never knew because you grew up with a horde of brothers. You take that best friend all the way to Vegas with you and your parents. You share clothes, makeup, jewelry, and a common passion for books. You experience laughs together and tears. You both have ups and down. That's a friendship. And with a friendship like that you think it will last forever...then you grow up.

My best friend, Emily, and I share so many memories from when we were in younger after she moved to my area in the fifth grade from Las Vegas. We were friends at that age but we became best friends around eighth grade after Emily's family fell onto some hard time that caused her to miss a lot of school and gain many health problems. Our group of friends didn't understand what she was going through at the time and neither did I. But unlike the most of our friends, I reached out to her and we started hanging out more. Just thinking about this now it seems forever ago that I walked away from Emily's house, after visiting with her, with two of our other friends.

It was a warmer fall day at nightfall. I was at our friend Kim's house to study, along with another member of our group, Monica. We were talking about Emily, who we hadn't seen in

weeks at school because she wasn't going. "Let's go over and see Emily." Kim suggested to me and Monica. Monica and I both heartily agreed and we all set out in jeans and sweaters. Walking, my hands in their usual position in my hoodie, I half listened to what Monica and Kim were saying, giving the occasional nod or "Yeah" when a comment was directed at me. The vanishing sunlight directed on the fading leaves and houses—turning them yellow—captivated my attention away from their conversation.

The walk to Emily's house was no more than four minutes from Kim's house. When we got there Emily opened the door, a contagious smile lit up her eyes. Emily's house was lived in and not dirty, but it did have the occasional item of clothing flown somewhere. This was the product of the laundry Emily's mom was folding; the television was on in the background.

"What are you guys doing here?" Emily asked us.

"We just thought we would come over to see how you were doing." Monica said.

"How are you feeling?" Kim asked. I was just standing there nodding and smiling, encouragement radiating through my ivory stained teeth.

"Good. I'm doing good. I'm feeling a lot better." Emily laughed a sigh of relief. The small chat following was the musing of what Emily was missing at school—not much I remember thinking—and in the choir she, Kim, and Monica were in. We didn't stay long, as the moon's shadows were rising and we wanted to be back at Kim's before dark. Emily gave each of us a hug before we left, her squeeze telling me how much she appreciated the visit. The rays of what little sunlight there was left were gone when we headed outside, replaced with the black of the moon's depth.

“Emily needs to get off her ass and go back to school. She’s not even sick,” Monica commented.

“I know. She’s probably just lying so she doesn’t have to go to school,” added Kim. The shock of what these two were saying ran through me. They were just as much Emily’s friend as I was. They were supposed to be her “best friends” compared to my “friend” status. It was this bad mouthing of her situation that made me get that gut-wrenching, wanting feeling to be her friend, to be that defender against any evil words said about her. This was weird to me because this feeling only ever came out around my family.

Fast forward seven years to my sophomore year in college. Emily and I were inseparable in high school and saw each other whenever we could outside of school, even after she dropped out during our junior year and me graduating and going to college. There were some tough fights—at the time—but they were not big fights, just little arguments over something stupid like a story we had to write for class one year or which boy was hotter. Every year in high school we grew closer and the first year I was in college we were the closest we had ever been. But as the summer after freshman year went into sophomore year, the days spent lounging in my pool or going to the movies became less and less. There came a time early on in the semester last year—my sophomore year—where the feeling of abandonment hit me like a dump truck full of rats (who would want that?!). I really didn’t have many friends I hung out with much and Emily was about the only person I talked to from high school; and she was hanging out with people who were our friends in high school more than she was talking to me. Don’t get me wrong, she was always happy to talk to me and I was her, but we didn’t hang out

as much as we did before I came to college. This dread feeling led me to post a deadly status on Facebook.

The day was no different than the rest of the days I had already spent in my white storm of bricks dorm room. I was lying on my bed under the mirror, looking at Facebook. There in my news feed was Emily talking about something or other that her friends Kim and Katie knew what it meant or were a part of. Envy did color me a few ugly shades of gray every time I saw this because more times than not I was available to join them; but Emily later said to me she didn't invite me because they (Kim and Katie) invited her and she didn't think she could bring me along. Though I would have brought her along no matter what they said as long as Emily available. So the abandonment reached the tips of my fingers, pushed by the envy to write the status, *I feel like I lost my best friend* 😞. And sure enough as soon as I posted it, as the tears were rolling down my face, Emily responded to my post because she knew it was about her. We exchanged a few more comments until I was tired of having a private conversation in a public common area. So I took out my phone and called her. The conversation drained the tears from me, but afterwards I felt a lot better about getting my feelings out in the open. Until the next morning when Kim got involved.

Have you ever had that friend that would stick up for you no matter what? Defend you to the ends of the Earth? Kim is like this; she is a great friend in that aspect. But with this type of trait she got into a lot of situations that were not her place be in. The incomplete conversation I had with Emily was on Facebook and Kim felt the need to comment on it as well. I was in class when she commented on my post so I did not know she had said anything but a

friend of mine took it upon herself to defend me against the rather hurtful comment Kim left. In my entire high school career I stayed away from drama and I was never picked on until the point where I felt I was being bullied. I was the type that kept to myself, my nose always in a book. Yet here I was at twenty years-old getting bullied through a post I meant to delete after class with only half of the evidence presented for the world to see. Yes I shouldn't have posted this thought on Facebook and then continued a conversation through it. At the same time what Kim did to me and my friend was just as bad. And it was this behavior on both of our parts that started to affect my friendship with Emily and ended the acquaintanceship I had with Kim.

The next summer the weight of what Kim had said and the repulsive feelings I had from it took its toll on my and Emily's friendship. It was a late, summer night when we had the life altering fight. The house right next to mine was on its way to being demolished; the grungy, old garage was the first building to get demolished. My parents and I were walking in our driveway along the edge of the rubble. The anger I felt at Emily all day was still there, the hurt of being blown off yet again. Emily was supposed to come to my house on the rare occasion we both had the day off from work, but she couldn't come and still let me believe that she was coming over. The ire that built in me had reached the high point of my tolerance level.

"Oh hey it was nice seeing you," I text her, the rage making the fading sky even darker.

"Dude...car fucked up. Like no shit have to spend 1000 to 1500 to get it fixed. I'm taking it to a real person tomorrow," she text me back. At this point I should have known something was wrong because Emily stopped cussing when she started going back to church the previous year.

“Took it to your brother huh? I said I’d come get you and get you back on time. I offered. And you never said you weren’t coming. Sorry if I’m a little hurt by that,” I responded.

Her response, *“Well sorry if I’m a lil pissed about my car! I did take it to my brothers to fix and he told me he couldn’t do it! 80 dollars into it and he couldn’t fix it! It has a hole in the piston! I’m sorry if I really don’t care that I hurt you. I’m trying to finds ways to fix my car and rides to Gerbs (her old choir director) and work. Not much room in there for friends.”*

The line she wrote about not caring if she hurt me turned the anger I had been feeling all day into downright, white-framing-my-vision rage. There are few times in my life where I can say I get tunnel vision and my heart beats really fast in anger, but this was one of those moments. It was this feeling and my family’s infuriated reaction that led me to escalate the fight, all the feelings I had been holding back were released. Though I escalated the argument—and said things I shouldn’t have—, it was Emily who ended it, saying she was done with me. I felt like a huge weight was lifted off my chest, the hurt nestled right under it.

I’m not sad that I went through this with a childhood friend. That may sound strange, but it gave me a true taste for how two people can grow apart. I went outside my bubble and said what I felt despite the fear of maybe losing Emily as a friend. The consequences are a hard thing to deal with. That is how I feel in this moment because I have insecurities with others from this experience. I am trying to learn to push those out of my mind, but they will always be there. That does not mean they have to overshadow me. That is true of the towering shadow of Emily I feel is always looming around me.

Writer's Commentary

For this essay I tried to use as much description as I could to try to recreate an image or scene mainly for myself so I could get into the moment I was talking about. That being said there were times where I felt—and I feel even now—that maybe I didn't describe well enough or I over-described it. It is this feeling that held me back at times, but I think having the descriptions of the scenes helped me remember more about the events. I know I had another document open for spur-of-the-moment things I remembered about the day or how I felt at the time (or how I feel now) that I felt could be important somewhere later on. (I didn't use more than one of them.)

What I liked most about what turned out from my descriptions were the images I created with things like the sunset or the emotion I may have felt. I mean I wrote about getting hit with a dump truck full of rats when I was trying to describe the loneliness I felt at the time. I don't like rats and that analogy makes no sense, but I feel that is the point. That's why I kept it. It describes the absurdity (to me) of what I felt and created that tie to emotion that is important. I was surprised at the word choices I used to make descriptions like the rats.

Overall these surprise word choices and arrangements and use of description helped me a lot during the revision part more so than the actual writing. I say this because when I was writing I just wrote what I felt and knew/remembered. This is where the surprises come from. I know that writing description for this essay helped me put how I felt into words that someone other than me could understand (I knew how I felt about the situation) and maybe get some kind of reaction from it. As a writer I feel that is all I could ask for.