1999 Third Place Personal Narrative

A Tear Between Twins

"Come on guys, we really shouldn't," I begged Shawn, the driver of our group date. "It is so rude of us to drive
by and ruin this special moment for Janae and Bryce. We all know why they have gone up to the temple don't
we? I mean it is their six month anniversary, and neither of them have had their first kiss yet! Hmmm..???

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Even though I truly meant what I was saying, a part of me wanted to ruin this fairytale event in their
relationship. Not that I disapproved of Janae and Bryce being together; I guess it was the fact that she was
moving a step ahead of me for the first time in our lives. After all, I had a reason for this mean streak--Bryce
had stolen my best friend.

February 13th, 1979, Janae and I were born in Sunrise Hospital, four minutes apart, to two anxious, ecstatic, and
not to mention exhausted parents. Immediately following the birth, the doctor glanced up at my mother and
father and announced that they were the proud parents of identical twin girls. My sister Janae was born first
weighing a mere four pounds 11 ounces and I swiftly followed, weighing a hefty seven pounds zero ounces
(very large for the average twin). The doctor proceeded to tell my mother that identical twins automatically
have a special bond that exists between them, and that she was to enjoy the many fun, challenging, yet exciting
experiences to come. One of the most challenging experiences to come would be the dreadful day when the two
of us would realize that we couldn't be together always. That memorable day we slept together, side by side, in
our rectangular clear plastic hospital beds -- determined to be inseparable for the remainder of our lives.

Several people are considerably fascinated with twins, but don't quite comprehend exactly what it is like to be
one. Actually, being a twin really isn't that different than not being a twin. (Or at least I don't think it is. The
truth is that I have never not been one.) I believe, however, there is one advantage to being an identical twin.
Identical twins are basically made up of the same ingredients. There is a connection that exists right from birth.
In our case, Janae and I have found that we enjoy the same books, the same sports, the same food, we love the
rain, and lastly our taste in guys is nearly the same. Now the last may sound a little unusual, but we always
agreed that if one of us were to start liking a guy, the other one would have to approve. In addition, not only
would we have to approve of his physical appearance, the chosen guy would have to learn to be best friends
with the twin sister. Fortunately this pact never came into effect until the night of March 2nd, 1996. Truthfully, I
never thought that anyone could break up our invincible relationship.

This was my attitude until the dreaded word appeared. The word that comes between any two best friends
during their teenage years: boyfriend. One unforgettable day, Bryce Leavitt asked my sister to accompany him
on a date for the first time. It seemed like any other date at first, but as the night wore on, the magic that existed
between them was unmistakable. From that first evening forward, the two of them dated quite often, to the point
where they decided to officially be "boyfriend and girlfriend." I couldn't believe it. What was I supposed to do
with all of my time now? Previously Janae and I had shared everything with each other, spent all of our time
together, and now all of the sudden there was a guy who had my sister's full attention. As jealously got the
better of me, I began to detest Bryce.
Being the first born, Janae has always been the one to do things first. As babies, Janae was the first to walk, and with Bryce, this tradition continued. The hardest thing for me to accept was their first kiss. She gathered my mom, my sisters Olivia, Melanie and Deidre and myself around the couch after our big date and told us how they had waited for six months before kissing and how perfect it was as they stood on Temple grounds, overlooking Las Vegas. The entire fairytale story unfolded flawlessly as the two of them defied the stereo-type of Las Vegas being a town full of sin. I couldn't help but think, "What is wrong with me?" It obviously couldn't be looks -- we're identical. In addition, I didn't think I was that much different in personality or talent, so why couldn't I have someone like she had?

Identical twins have a sense of knowing what the other is thinking at points, and also what their opinions and standpoints are on certain subjects. Many times Janae and I have sat laughing in our room over the fact that neither of us really has to talk to the other because we already know what the other one is going to say. Janae sensed that there was a conflict between Bryce and me. It wasn't that we would fight in the open, we would just make rude comments about each other, and attempt to stay away from one another as much as possible. At times, Bryce would get so upset with the fact that I was constantly hanging out with the two of them that he would convince one of his buddies to ask me out. I was insulted. Did Bryce think that I couldn't get dates for myself? Did he think that I was incapable of finding someone to spend my time with? How rude of him! But, instead of turning her away from him, this made Janae cling to him like a newborn baby clings to her mother. It almost became an obsession of mine to find ways to get rid of Bryce. I would encourage Janae to date other guys (I would even persuade several boys to ask her out), I would embarrass her about kissing on the doorstep when she would come in from a date, I would spy on them, and lastly I would make their fights or squabbles seem worse than they really were. Unfortunately, all of these schemes did not work.

The one thing I finally concluded was that if she was so happy, I too could be just as happy, if not more. So, I found a boyfriend during the summer for the sheer chance to experience, along with Janae and Bryce, what it felt like to have someone. At first it was great, and things were working out perfectly, but it didn't last long. I was thankful for the experience of learning what it was like to actually give my heart to someone, and letting him in my life. For the first time I understood some of Janae's feelings for Bryce. Eventually, it became obvious that I was not the type of girl who was willing to be devoted to one particular guy. One day in my life this attitude will change (of course it will have to in order for me to get married), but for now I wanted to be free. Free from commitments, free from effort, free from gossip, free from getting my heart broken, but most of all, free from competing with Janae and Bryce. I decided then that I wouldn't have a boyfriend for a very long time and that I would just date as many guys that I possibly could. That may seem like a pretty exciting, fun-filled life, but it had its share of complications. Many nights I sat alone in my room wishing I had a boyfriend who would just come over at the drop of the hat, or while on dates, wishing that I could have someone to make me feel comfortable and accepted. All the while, in the back of my mind, I wanted Janae to be experiencing these things with me, but she wasn't.

This dumb boy continued ruining my plans. My dream was that the two of us would not find guys we wanted to marry until we were at least 20, and here she was seriously considering waiting for him on his mission. I wrestled in my mind how it was possible for my sister to have these feelings for such a young man when they were both only 16 on their first date. For a long time, I wished for his mission to come sooner so that I could at least have my best friend back for two years while he was gone.

The day finally came when I realized that my attitude was completely wrong, and that I had been handling this situation incorrectly. I needed to start looking at things from Janae and Bryce's point of view, not just mine. For example, I thought Bryce was being inconsiderate by trying to set me up on all of these dates with his friends when, in actuality, he was trying to please Janae. Janae wanted so badly for me to join them in their many outings and excursions that Bryce thought the only way to make Janae happy was to find me dates so that I would be able to join them. In addition, I began to put myself in Janae's shoes realizing how frustrating it would be to have my sister always there when I was with the man I cared for, and at the same time feeling bad that she had no one to be with.
It came to the simple conclusion that the only way to have my sister back was to not attempt to fight Bryce for her, but to accept and love him as much as she did. I needed to take the time to find out all of the qualities my sister looked for in him. If Janae loves this guy, he really can't be that bad. From that point forward, I began to see the qualities in Bryce that made Janae love him so much. After 14 years of lessons, this kid was incredible on the piano. He ran track and specialized in distance races. His academic status remained one of the highest in his class, but most of all, he loved Janae more than life itself. He would do anything for her happiness, and he did do quite a lot. Bryce created a world of happiness for Janae, which in turn allowed me to also feel a peace knowing how content her life had become.

I imagine my mother had no clue what to expect that first day she held both of us in her arms while she rocked us to sleep on our first day of life here on earth. Part of her test was to teach us all we needed to know to survive in this big scary world, and also to instruct us to realize that we wouldn't be able to handle it without each other. This has been obvious recently with the two of us trying to survive college life. Simple things like having to worry about getting along with your roommate or the constant yearning to have family near by are not concerns of ours. Boyfriends or no boyfriends, we have learned that the one thing that we will always have is our friendship. It is our challenge to make sure we don't break or tear that unique gift that true identical twins share.