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Portrait of a Sister

Adam Brown

Disclaimer
All of the following is absolutely true, except the parts for which I could be sued.

“For Christ’s sake!”

“Excuse me!” Mum screamed back. “I won’t have that kind of language in this house!”

“I’m sure Jesus doesn’t care. In fact, with so few people actually saying his name these days, I’m sure he’d appreciate the publicity!”

“You’re just as bad as your brother,” she growled and stormed out of the room. My sister, who was two years younger than me, stood in the corner and chuckled to herself quietly.

“Thanks for your help,” I said to the sixteen-year-old I always found myself supporting in the other domestic conflicts that ensued throughout the week.

“Better you than me,” she grinned. “You’ve taken the focus off the fact I broke the chandelier this morning.”

I couldn’t help but smile. “How did you manage that?”

“Playing indoor bowls with Luke and the turkey from the freezer.”

“What were you using as pins?”

“Luke’s legs.”

I checked my phone – there was still no message.

“Why don’t you just grow some balls and call her?”

It was funny how Abbie, the youngest member of the family, always knew most about what was going on and yet cared least about it. Although she didn’t ask, I told her all about the night before, the girl I met, the great time we had, the jokes we laughed at, the similarities we shared, the numbers we’d exchanged.

“She was drunk, wasn’t she?” were my sister’s words of encouragement. “And for you to be able to talk to a girl, you must have been too.”

It was harsh, but I couldn’t argue the point. I still felt the last sharp pangs resulting from the previous night’s conglomeration of loud
music, excessive alcohol and the screams of a homeless man who wanted us to pay a fee to make out on his bench.

"You want my advice?" Abbie asked, propping her elbows up on the kitchen bench and leaning towards me with a slightly menacing air.

It felt kind of strange to be accepting tips on life from a rebellious adolescent trying to reach the innermost circle of Dante's Inferno before she hit seventeen (and making good progress!), but I didn't have anything else to go on. So I assented to whatever words of wisdom she had to offer.

"Fuck people!"

At first I thought I'd heard her wrong. My sister was no angel, but she didn't have a revolving door as a point of entry to her bedroom! She sent most of the guys who expressed an interest in her the same pre-written text message telling them to meet her in some small, dark cafe all the way over on the other side of the city. She never showed up of course, but at least she sent them a message.

She saw by my expression that I had misunderstood her, and quickly made amends. "No, you moron! Not fuck people - fuck people! Screw them all!"

Again, this was open to interpretation, but this time I got her drift. I had to admit that, at least in appearance, my sister practiced what she preached - she didn't seem to care about anyone, or like anyone.

"Every other fucking person on this planet is here just to punish us! It makes you fucking sick!"

"Where is that boy?" hissed Mum to nobody but herself as she re-entered the room. She had evidently tired of harassing me, and was looking for our brother Luke to scold. Not finding her prey, she turned on me: "Take your sister to work will you." Again, this wasn't a question.

"I am old enough to walk nine blocks!" Abbie protested, and while I'd usually back her up on this, I was keen for any excuse to get out of the house.

"You're old enough to walk when I tell you you're old enough to walk! Where is your brother?" she asked us as I grabbed my car keys.

"He had to go to the doctor," Abbie commented abruptly, yet matter-of-factly, as she followed me out the door.

"What's wrong with him?" Mum asked, without much compassion.

"Turkey in the testicles."