

Kaleena Deshawn

It was about an hour long car ride. We spent most of it in silence, sitting in the back seat as we stared out the window and sometimes at each other. My sister and I were close, despite the five year age difference. We had spent most of our childhoods attached at the hip and now that we were adults, even if barely so, I only realized that time had brought us closer. I thought that this might bring us closer too.

From the moment she had gotten home that day my sister didn't leave my side. I knew it was out of love, but I also wondered if it had been out of fear. I wondered if she was scared like I was because the thought of losing a sister seemed like something so frightening to dwell on even for a second. But there I was sitting in the back seat with my sister on the way to try and comfort someone who was dealing with just that, facing that fear head on just like their sister had faced those headlights. I didn't know what I was meant to say to them. I'm sorry I didn't at all seem good enough, but nothing else seemed to make sense. I thought about asking my sister as I turned to her, but I was met with the same unknowing, sad and confused expression I was sure had lingered on my face for most of that day and was still present. I decided on giving her the best smile I could muster instead and then turning back towards the window.

I realize now that I overlooked a lot in those moments, like how we ended up in the car with a couple we weren't very close to as they bickered about directions. Or why that day of all days our uncle had decided to pick up a coworker who sat in the back seat of our father's van with an empty bottle of Heineken. He had probably gotten rid of it before my parents piled into the car, but I had seen it when our Uncle picked me up from the dentist earlier. I remember looking at it and the man who's teeth made me want to brush my own 4 times a day and getting sick to my stomach as a thought of the alcohol and the headlights.

Worst of all we had overlooked how no one had seen our brother all day; that our mother didn't know he was home that morning when my sister told me what happened and had sent him a text message because she didn't want to call and wake him with bad news, but she also didn't want him to find out over Facebook. He was home though and when we were asked later where he was we simply stated that he had locked himself in the basement where his room was, the lights all out and that he wasn't speaking to anyone. It all seems really dumb now, like we had all forgotten how to function at all, but I guess considering the situation it makes sense. I guess that considering the circumstances that it made sense that nothing anyone was doing made any sense at all.

I remember pulling up to the scene of the accident, slowly rolling through. I could hear the voices of the bickering couple, no longer arguing, but I doubt I'll ever know what they were actually saying. I imagined my sister was mesmerized and confused the way I was, staring out at the police tape, the tread marks and accident markers, the sympathy balloons and candles already crowding the fence and the large chunk of bark missing from the tree a few feet away. As we slowly passed, I let it all sink in or at least that's what I told myself I was doing. I still don't think it's sunk in, not for me or my sister or anyone.

As I saw all those things I remembered why we'd rushed into the car, not caring who was driving; it was an overwhelming need, a need to be with the ones we loved; aunts, uncles and cousins, to comfort them even though we didn't have any idea how. We just wanted them to know that we were still there, that we loved them and that even though we felt awful we knew they were feeling something worse the lose of a sister a daughter and a mother. I hope they felt that in our hugs because I don't remember actually saying anything to them when we made it to their house, about a minutes walk away from the fence with all the balloons, the blood stains on the road and the tree without the bark.