

LITERACY NARRATIVE

"We are not Alone"

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"Where did you get this? From school? You know, I've always been interested in this one, but I've never had the time to read it. Mind if I borrow it for awhile?" The book was Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, and it was part of the curriculum for my third year English class. This particular book represented more than an assignment, though. It represented a connection with my family that I had lost a long time ago.

I was in shock. "Yeah... you've never read it? I guess I thought you had. I have to read it for Mr. Scotese's class."

If there is one thing a sibling can do, it is make you jealous. though, I have to admit I've learned things from mine as well. My older sister, Nova, was always and always will be an avid reader and writer. She doesn't remember not liking to read or be read to. Our dad has early home movies of our family, and in almost every one, Nova is sitting somewhere in our house reading. I had never realized how often she sat down to look at a magazine, newspaper or novel. I must have gotten used to the fact that she preferred to sit in the living room rather than watch television. I often scanned her bookshelves to see if I had read anything she owned. No such luck. Some of them were children's books, but a good number of them were difficult, I'm sure for a twelve

year old, I didn't own nearly as many of them as she did, most of them were old favorites of our parents.

I wasn't so concerned with our differences until about the first year of my teens. It was then that I started to feel like the unintelligent, immature sister. I still didn't read as much and found the outlet I needed. For ten years of my life, swimming was the one thing I loved more than anything. I became the athlete of the family and used the excuse that school and swim team took all my reading time. This didn't exactly explain my lack of desire, though.

Up until the middle of high school, I assumed I was the dumb sister and reading only came natural for some people. I didn't know I could learn to love it like the rest of my family. It was always in the back of my mind that I was living up to something I didn't want. As much as I loved swimming, I couldn't shake the fact I was becoming a "type."

I began to worry about why I didn't like to read like Nova. Whenever I finished a book, it would take me awhile to start another. These were all for school, so it wasn't reading for pleasure. My sister, however, always had a book in hand. She and my dad sometimes talked together about the books they were reading. I listened to their conversations and even though they sounded boring, I wanted to join in. I could show I had insight and was able to make thoughtful comments. The role of athlete was taking over. Of the time being, I would settle, but something had to be done.

When I took Mr. Scotese' English literature class my junior year, I could tell immediately that he would take a different approach to reading and writing. The first question he proposed was "Why do we read literature?" I could only think of the obvious answers: because the school makes us, because it's fun for some people. He then gave an unexpected answer, which although it scared me at first, turned out to be true, "To know we are not alone." At the time, I couldn't quite understand how deeply it related to my reading dilemma.

During the year, we read several Shakespearean plays and English poetry. We acted out a few scenes as well. The English course became more of a drama class. Doing this gave me a new feeling about what I was reading because these are the feelings and conversations among other people.. The poetry of Robert Burns and John Donne gave me even more joy. "To a Mouse" and "Song" honestly made me happy. To hear how the words fit together was unlike anything I had ever experienced before. I realized that they wrote those words with the intention that someone like me would read them and understand what they meant, that they hoped to reach me with those words. I had long needed something like this, someone who wanted to affect me with words.

My dad found my copy of *The Tempest* on a bookshelf about a year later and asked me if I had read it. He wanted to borrow the book from me. Me, who had for so long looked at everyone else's shelves, only to find what I had not read. Although I was initially shocked that he hadn't read something I had, it was a great feeling to be able to

share this book with him. I gave him a summary and for the first time felt I could relate to someone through it. When Mr. Scotese said we read to know we are not alone, he was talking about sharing with one another through literature. In this one instance with my dad, I was able to use the book as a vehicle for relating to him. It has been a long while since I've felt like the literary outcast of my family.