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Jason and Amanda vs. the World (2012)

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The day my little brother, Jason, was born was the most confusing and disorienting day of my life. I was only two at the time, but it was traumatic enough that I still remember everything. I can still remember my mom being pregnant, but I don’t think I really understood what was about to happen to me. Since my parents were at the hospital for his birth, I had to stay the night at my grandparents’ house. We visited the next day. When I went into my mom’s hospital room and saw her holding him, I didn’t feel any resentment . . . yet.

Sibling rivalry is supposed to be normal after the second child is born, but how could I compete against something as appealing as a baby brother? I had spent the first two years of my life as the center of attention. My mom didn’t work; she stayed at home and played with me all day. Now, everything was all about Jason.

Due to his existence, I began to dislike baby dolls, something that I loved before he came along. I remember my dad buying me a doll once. I didn’t want anything to do with it. It was like having a baby brother ruined the idea of taking care of a pretend baby. And why would I need one if there was a real baby living in my house? I hated that everyone
was always smiling at him and acting like he was the best thing ever, because that's the way they used to treat me.

As we got older, I became the “bad child” who always got in trouble, and my brother was the “good child” who never got caught doing anything wrong. Even if he did get caught, he would just tell my parents that he "learned it from me," and of course, I would be the one to get in trouble for it. Everyone said I was jealous of him for some reason, but I wasn't. I just didn't like that he was taking up everyone's attention. Everything was a competition. It was me against him. I was always looking for a way to switch our roles.

Sometimes it was nice having a brother, though. We stuck up for each other a lot when we were younger. When we were in grade school, a bully was picking on me and calling me names. I didn't really care, but when Jason found out, he was angry and punched the bully in the face for me. Even though I knew it was wrong, I was still really grateful to him. And another time on the playground, an older kid was throwing rocks at Jason, and I pushed the kid down. To me, pushing down some kid on a playground did not seem like a bad thing if I was doing it to keep Jason safe. I've always felt really protective of him, even though he's more than capable of taking care of himself and fighting his own battles.

We were also always there for each other if one of us would get in trouble. If he were to get scolded for doing something wrong, I would
always take his side, and vice versa. It was like we were on the same team. It was us against authority. Jason and I versus the world.

It was literally impossible for me to ever feel lonely because Jason was always there. Whenever there wasn't anything to do, or anywhere to go, he and I would play a game. We usually played with Legos. I remember once, we spent an entire Saturday in his bedroom constructing a theme park. We would also set up a ramp in his room and have a competition to see whose Matchbox cars could jump farther. Sometimes I could even get him to play dolls with me.

All of my friends in grade school also had little brothers that were Jason's age. For the most part, they didn't get along as well as we did. All they seemed to do was fight. When I think about it now, I guess Jason and I were closer as kids than I realized. At the time, it seemed like we were just as mean to each other as they were, but he never really did anything bad to me. Sometimes we would fight, but neither of us ever really had malicious intentions.

As we both got older, we both became interested in different things and stopped hanging out with each other so much. He started playing baseball and hanging out with his friends at their houses and I was more interested in academics and finding myself. Our personalities started clashing a lot, and we argued and got on each other's nerves a lot more than usual.
Almost two years ago, something happened that changed everything for my family. We found out that my mom had cancer in her eye, and that she would have to have surgery to have her whole eye removed so it wouldn't spread. There was no doubt that she would be okay, but the idea of it was terrifying. For a long time, I've been so scared that something like that would happen. Even though there were so many people offering their condolences and support, I felt alone. It's so hard to think of something like that happening to her, and it still makes me want to cry. When she got back from the hospital after her surgery, I could barely stand to look at her without breaking down.

After she was settled in and sleeping, I sat in my room and sobbed. I couldn't stop thinking about what my mother must have been feeling. Jason came into my room after a while and just hugged me. Instantly, I wasn't alone in this anymore, that was for sure. It was like we were little kids again. It was us versus the world. It was one of the first times I truly realized how lucky I am to have him for my brother. Even after all of our disagreements and arguments, all the times that we were mean to each other, Jason was still there for me when I really needed him most. He might act silly or annoying sometimes just to get on my nerves, but since that day, I've really appreciated him. Whenever I get mad enough to wonder why I even have a brother, I think back to what he did for me.

Jason and I still argue all the time, and there are days when I wish he would just disappear for a while. But since I left home for school and
we don’t see each other every day, I really do miss his company. We talk on the phone sometimes and we send each other texts too. That’s something we never did until we weren’t living in the same house. For a while, Jason and I didn’t ever talk about anything with each other, but now when I go home to visit, he always has a funny story to tell me about what’s going on with school or his friends, and it’s nice. It’s nice being able to just talk to him without him pushing me away. Now that we are both older, I feel like we can actually talk. He is one of the only people who I can actually have a serious conversation with.

Although I don’t think he would admit it to me, we miss each other. But I will admit it. I miss the simple days when we were kids. I miss playing outside on our swing set, riding bikes, and playing dinosaurs under the tree in the front yard. I miss going swimming at the beach and building sand castles. I miss building Lego houses together on the living room floor. Our friendship and childhood memories mean everything to me.

My parents always told me that one day I would be really happy to have a brother. Finally, after years of saying that it wasn’t true, I will openly admit now that I love my brother. He is one of the most important people in my life, and I could not live without him.