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English 1010

2/1/2012 Reflection Essay

The Haunted House Dynamic

I think there is a lot of truth to be said that much of who you are is where you came from. And the base of where all of us start is family, in some form or another. My family is what some might call dysfunctional. My mother has been married and divorced four times. She had my older sister René with her second husband Bill, Me with her third husband Neal, and my three younger siblings Victoria, James and Sarah with her fourth husband Tom. My biological father Neal has been married and divorced three times, and had six other children besides me. You could say they were quite busy.

With all these half-blood relations, I have oftentimes felt myself quite isolated and separate from the pack. Not out of desire, but more out of dynamic. When I was younger, you would often find me trailing closely after my older, and often frustrated sister René, begging for a chance to play with her and her friends. She would constantly tell me that I was too young and that I needed to leave her alone. Big girls don't play with little girls.

“MOM!!!” I yelled in one such instance. “René is being a meanie face and not letting me play with her and her friends!”

“ Oh would you two please just get along for once!” my mother begged. “René, go outside and play with your sister. I need some peace and quiet!”

René relented. “Ha ha ha!” I laughed mockingly into her face.

“You can only play with us under one condition” René told me once we were outside. “You have to prove that you are a big enough girl by going into the haunted house across the street,” she said with a winning smirk, sure I wouldn’t do it.

Well, I have always been one to rise to a challenge. Not to mention I couldn’t let my sister see me a coward, or make me look foolish in front of her older and cooler friends. My family often said that I was prone to shoot first and ask questions later, thus earning me the endearing nickname, “The Bowling Ball.”

The house across the street was really an old, run down farmhouse. It was set far away from the street with many large trees obscuring its dark gray paneling from view. Ivy grew from ground to roof, covering windows and railings. If you got close enough, you would see a faded, peeling porch covered in moss and leaves. The front room window was shattered, leaving the wind to play with the curtain inside. The front door itself was barred with wooden planks and a white sign that said “Danger!” in bold red paint. It was dark and foreboding, and my insides churned at the prospect of even approaching it.

I remember walking slowly across the overgrown and weed-choked lawn to the encouragement of René and her friend. When I reached the edge of the porch I hesitated, remembering the stories of ladies in white seen in the windows and the tales of bloody bodies in the shed around back. But with the goading of my sister behind me I dared not turn back.

I stepped onto the porch. It creaked. The breeze whispered around me, telling me to leave this place as quick as my feet would carry me. The curtains in the broken front window billowed out, beckoning me onward. My feet moved forward as if they had a will of their own. I stepped in front of the window.

My sister and her friend moved up behind me, encouraging me further. We were all still for a moment, waiting to see if I would truly enter the forbidden.

“Chicken...” René whispered.

That was it. I was going to show her I was better than her and her friends. I gathered my courage and lifted my leg over the ledge of the window. My foot touched the floor on the other side, glass shifted and crunched under my sudden weight. The sound seemed to echo through my bones. I stood deathly still; sure I had woken some malevolent spirit.

Nothing happened.

Feeling bold, I swung my other leg over the ledge and placed my foot on the floor. Sure of my balance, I arched my back and used the pane of the window to thrust myself the rest of the way in. A breath of wind followed me. The curtain behind me stirred. I felt something brush up against my leg. I screamed bloody murder. René's voice joined mine in terror. I scrambled through the window, desperate for escape.

My feet hit the porch with a thud and I felt the wood beneath my feet start to give way. For a split second, I feared that the house had come to life and was trying to capture me, furious that I was escaping. I didn't give it a chance to. I bolted off that porch like a deranged rabbit.

I could hear my blood pumping in my ears when I finally stopped running and joined René and her friend in front of our house.

René came at me like a bull, “what'd you go screaming like that for?! Are you dumb or something?!” I raised my arms to block her attack, but all her rage was kept back by the sound of the screen door slamming closed.

It was my Mom.

“What in heaven’s name is going on here?” demanded my mother. “What did you do to your sister René!”

It was only then, as my mother rushed towards me, that I realized the pain in my legs was not from my sprint across the yard, but from the awful looking bloody scrapes that ran down both of my legs. Apparently my window escape had not been quite as graceful as I had imagined.

My Mother was furious. René was grounded and her friend had to go home. I was grounded too for being foolish enough to listen to René, which I felt was unfair.

Dark looks and angry huffs were exchanged across the dinner table that night. My younger sister Victoria, who was three at the time, threw food into my hair. Rene’ laughed at my unfortunate new “saucy” style. I pushed my chair back violently and left the room with as much dramatic flair as possible.

I washed up in the bathroom and then flung myself onto my bed with a wail of emotion. Life was so unfair. My legs ached, my nose was runny, I had a headache from crying, and I had a stupid, mean sister who didn’t want to play with me. Life was so unfair.

It was in that moment of the deepest self-pity that I heard my bedroom door creek open. Socked feet shuffled across my bedroom floor. The hinges of my bed squeaked and rattled as the unknown someone crawled onto my bed. And then I felt the unmistakable boney, yet warm arms of my sister René wrap around my shaking shoulders.

“shhhhh...” she whispered softly into my ear.

I didn’t know what to say in that moment. I was still too upset to think clearly.

“I’m sorry Eva.”

My walls broke down and I turned into her arms and accepted her sisterly hug. It was in that moment, when my sister was holding me, that I felt what family was really all about.