

Note to readers: This essay, written by Bailey Charest, includes some disturbing descriptions that some may find difficult to read.

I believe everyone has a certain person in their life that inspires them to live each day to the fullest. It is what makes them tick. A sole moment in time can be all it takes for a person's view on life to change forever. Looking back into my own past, I can quickly identify who inspires and motivates me to live my life to the fullest. It is her, the one that I feel so close to me yet nearly impossible to reach. As much as I would love to feel her touch, I know she is in a place with no pain or suffering. She is the reason I wake up every day ready to fill my own shoes while attempting to fill a pair for her.

My memory of her does not deceive me. Fifteen years later, when I close my eyes at night, the nightmare is still the same.

"No!" shrieks a small, dark haired little girl, "I want to see my mumma!"

"For the last time, it is not going to happen" the woman insists while trying to stay calm.

As if on cue, the lights above flicker, and the snow outside is still falling fast. A blood curdling scream starts coming out of the little girl's mouth. Losing the calm demeanor she just had, the woman shakes her head with fury.

"Stop this now, I cannot handle this anymore!" the woman is screaming and shaking with anger.

I sit as still as possible on the soft rug nearby not wanting to be noticed. Another scream is let out by the little girl, somehow this one is louder and more powerful than the previous. The woman stands up and forcefully grabs the child's small, delicate wrist and pulls her towards the nearby door. Wide eyed, the child decides to stay quiet, but is still sobbing. The lights briefly flicker again. The woman opens the door, and leads the child down the stairs to the basement. I hear two sets of footsteps descend down, my heart is pounding. I am frozen in place. All is quiet at first, then a violent scream starts. It is heart wrenching. Finally, the saddest sound, one a wounded animal might make when it knows it is going to die. I hear the little girl's voice for the last time, it is the word "help." Everything goes silent, but it seems louder than the screams. Finally after some time, I hear footsteps coming back up the stairs, but this time it is only one set. A single tear falls down my face.

I wish I could say that this is just a nightmare that I am able to wake up from and have everything be all okay. Sadly that is not the case. This is a nightmare that I will have to live with awake or asleep for the rest of my life. I heard my older sister's last words during one of Maine's darkest moments on January 31, 2001. My five-year-old sister's death became national news. Her story prompted Maine to reexamine many of DHS's Child & Family Services policies. Our own foster mother murdered my older sister, Logan. Being the survivor of this horrid incident, I push myself to my limits and strive for excellence in everything for the both of us. I am not saying that any of this has been easy, but it has most certainly shaped me into the person I am today. I know that her life was taken away from her all too soon. This causes me to live each day of my life to the fullest. There are no guarantees in life, so I make the most out of the path I have been given. I do it all for Logan and me.