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Linnea Sardina
Violet
Digital photograph

To My Sister
Kait Harland

When you say, “She’s my little sister,” people assume a lot of things.

It depends on the person, what they assume, but they all assume just the same. Some think of their own little sister, who they see mostly as a nuisance, and they’ll assume you feel the same way about yours. Some think of their friend’s kid sister, who’s always getting in the way, and they’ll think, “man, I’m glad I don’t have one of those.” Others are more benevolent, assuming that you love your little sister, but only because she’s family, and you’re obligated to love your family, right?

So maybe instead, I should say, “She’s my best friend.”

Because when you say “best friend,” people realize that you’re talking about the person who’s seen you at your darkest and said “I love you” anyway. They realize that you’re talking about the person you grew

up with, played dolls with, talked about boys with, suffered through puberty with. When you say “best friend,” people don’t hear *nuisance*, they hear *confidante* and *beloved*. They understand that your love for that person is in no way obligatory, but real and true and strong.

But maybe that’s not right either.

Because if you think about it, a best friend can fall away. Time and distance can worm their way in between you, and the next thing you know you haven’t spoken to or seen them in weeks or months or years, and you wonder, *do they remember me?* Your best friend as a child can be the girl you sit with at lunch, and then you graduate from elementary school and never see each other again. Your best friend in high school can be your favorite person in the universe, and then you go to different colleges and move to different states, and just like that—you don’t know her anymore, but you wonder if she remembers your birthday, because you remember hers. You can lose your best friend in a way that you can never lose your sister.

So if she’s not my little sister and she’s not my best friend, then what is she?

The flame to my candle? The pages to my book? The rain to my garden? How do I describe the person who’s never turned away from my hot-headed words, my immature cold shoulder, my worst and most destructive self? How do I tell people, “She’s the one who brought me cheese toast to apologize even when I was in the wrong;” “She’s the one who made me a blanket fort and brought me ramen when I had the flu;” “She’s the one who wrote silly stories and gave them to me as birthday gifts when we were both too young to afford anything less;” How do I say that I would not only die, but kill for her?

I think the right word must be soulmate.

Not in the made-up, romantic sense of the word, but in its purest, most beautiful form: someone you’re meant to be with. Your other half, your missing piece, your truest love. That is what I mean when I say, “She’s my little sister.” I mean that she holds me together, completes me, makes everything okay. She’s full of hugs, full of joy, full of life, full of everything I am not and everything I need to survive. She is my soulmate; she is everything.

So, to my little sister, to my best friend, to my soulmate: I love you. Thank you for loving me better.