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Connection

Oz Carrollo
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you do that to your sister?"

How could she? Well, I don't know. But it was the first of many things she "did to her sister" after luring me in with that innocent smile and my own curiosity.

Knocking me off a fast-spinning merry-go-round onto cement; stealing friends and turning them against me; telling me – seven months pregnant – that pregnant bellies disgust her; belittling my every dream or interest.

Why did I keep giving her chance after chance? What part of me needed to trust her? To be close to her? Like sisters are *supposed* to be?

Even when she began using her religion as a weapon – "Mom's in hell because she wasn't born again. Do you want to go there too?" – I held out a ray of hope. She was still my sister even if we didn't share the same beliefs about the afterlife.

She was in town to see our dad as his health was failing, the first time I'd seen her in a few years. We sat having lunch with Dad at a restaurant close to his care facility. He took his walker to go to the bathroom.

As soon as he was out of earshot, she leaned in close, looked me in the eye and said, "I have to tell you something. You really need to hear it."

Thanks for being here with Dad? I wish I could be here to help? You and other sis are doing a great job?

She smiled sadly and said, "You are a horrible person." There was no emotion. Just imparting facts. "And you're going to hell."

Something inside me broke at that moment. Not for fear of going to hell. What broke was whatever tiny thread I had hoped there was between this person and me. All the memories we had of growing up together. All the laughs we did have between the *incidents*. Anything that could have held us together. It all evaporated. I had tolerated decades of abuse trying to stay close to her, trying to gain her approval.

As Dad returned to the table, I said, "Ready to go? I think we're done here."

And I was.

I was finally done. Free to find my real sisters--those whose ties are genuine, and much stronger than blood.

Connection

Oz Carollo — Charcoal Drawing

