

Questioning Perfection

I wish perfection were a contagious disease; then I could get ill and become as perfect as my brother. He'd smile, and the world would bask in the golden light of his perfection: *Who is this flawless creature*, they'd wonder, *and how may we worship him?* Next to my godly brother, I was the palm-flapper—you know, the person in the background who flaps a giant palm leaf around, lest her brother actually break a sweat in his quest to lead The Perfect Life. (And let me tell you—no, he never actually did break a sweat. Not when he captained both the varsity basketball and lacrosse teams, or when he got that perfect SAT score, or when he landed at the top of his class.)

It was ritual for my mother to stare at me curiously and conduct her examinations aloud. *Who is this bumbling creature*, she'd wonder, *and is she actually related to my son?* With a sigh, she would lament, "Your brother can do it, but why is it that you can't?"

Since childhood, television shows have splendidly programmed my beliefs, in particular the belief that everyone is a special little snowflake and that I, being such a snowflake, should not want to be like my brother. So whenever my mother repeated her wish for me to be like my brother, I held onto my little nugget of television wisdom. I knew, deep down, that I had to be my own person. Besides, living my own life was difficult enough already without the complicated task of mimicking dear brother.

Yet, it was hard not to want some of his Midas Touch, to turn everything into a shiny A plus with an effortless scribble of the pen. Perhaps it was the desire to better myself that motivated me to help others in more unfortunate circumstances, like the neighbor who had recently become widowed, or the young girl whose mother abandoned her.

After meeting with Mrs. Pierceman, an 80 year-old hag who had no idea what to do with her life after her husband's death, I learned that life, in all honesty, sucks. Those stupid television shows that I used to worship were just that, a television show. It was a sham: A ploy to get people like tweedle dee and tweedle dum to believe that there was more to life. Even with the girl, after her mom left, she didn't know what to do but start smoking and flunk out of high school. *What the hell was I supposed to do?*

I couldn't even handle my own life. How was I supposed to help her or Mrs. Pierceman with their lives?

So, I couldn't help my mother to become the perfect daughter, I couldn't become the perfect person and have the right answers for Mrs. Pierceman, and I couldn't help that poor girl from flunking school. I ultimately can't do anything.

I can't be my brother. I can't be Mrs. Pierceman's husband. And I can't be the girl's mother. So, what can I be, but me?