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My Story

I know Inferiority as well as I know the layout of my front yard. Not surprising. I was stricken with the monster disease nearly fifteen years ago and am only now being healed from it. Inferiority is ruthless and devastating. It's a cancer that begins so small that you hardly recognize it as a killer, but then it metastasizes into something that, if left unchecked, will ruin your life.

I know the gut-wrenching pain that comes from Inferiority telling me I'm worthless. I carried a self-inflicted bruise just because Inferiority said, "You deserve it!" And I know about buckets full of tears when my shattered self-esteem

laid me crumpled on my bed, wishing I had never been born.

You see, I'm the third born.

The firstborn of our family is brilliant, yet down-to-earth and wonderful. But she is four years my senior, which—in the circle I grew up in—meant her world didn't overlap much with mine.

Then there there's Jenna, the second child. I didn't have a good word to describe her until a woman I loved told me this, "Jenna is just a doll." I wasn't sure what the definition of "doll" was, but I supposed I finally had a description for this sister of mine. In my opinion she is beautiful. Thin. Talented. Popular. Neat. Classy. Sings like an angel. Outgoing, but not overbearing. Has a personality that makes friends with everyone. The kind to have, as she says, more boyfriends than she wanted. A clean freak, bothered because she couldn't take her toilet off its base to clean under it. Positive and optimistic. Confident. A doll.

And then there's me, the third born. The ordinary one. Aside from my school years, when my good grades and plentiful friendships gave me a

place to belong and the confidence to go with it, I have always been the shy one of our family.

For years I lived in Jenna's shadow. There may still be a group of people out there who don't know my name, and who possibly even question whether I have one. To them, I was "Jenna's sister." I didn't have an identity of my own. But in my teens I neither needed one nor missed having one, because Jenna would drive the car, talk to the people, entertain the friends, and pay the cashier. I was her shy sidekick, nervous when noticed, and often self-judging the few comments I did make as "dumb."

I didn't have many close friendships in those years, but I had Jenna. She was experiencing a spiritual revival and, with the blessing of our parents, had begun attending another church. Occasionally she would take me with her to special church services or to their city children's ministry. She was my social outlet, my spiritual example, and my friend. I needed her.

In spite of the spiritual awakening and deepening taking place within me, I often felt insignificant and of little worth. Sometimes after coming

home from an event with Jenna, I would lie in my bed thinking back over everything I had spoken. Speaking as little as I did at social events, I could remember almost every word I had said all evening. My words sounded so stupid to me that I could feel my cheeks turn red in the darkness of my room. I bit the inside of my lip. That wasn't enough punishment, so I pinched myself, hoping the physical pain would override my emotional turmoil. Sometimes I'd work up the courage to talk to Jenna about what I had said, shriveling in embarrassment as I confessed my stupidity. In her easy way, she would set my fears to rest by saying, "Oh, that wasn't dumb at all!" I would relax. That is, I would relax about the words I had spoken, but that couldn't take away the feelings of stupidity for bruising myself.

Then Jenna got married and moved seventeen hours away. My world crashed. This was more than a wonderful sister getting married to a nice guy at a beautiful wedding; this was me losing my identity, social life, and best friend all in one ruthless day.

Not only that, but I had to take over Jenna's job as secretary for my dad's business, which meant I was forced to answer the phone and talk to people. In retrospect, it was probably one of the best things that could have happened to me in my shell, but at the time, it was torture. At least at first.

My saving factor was that I seriously wanted to know God and to follow Him. I had seen that my shyness was largely self-centered, had taken that to God, and was working at overcoming it.

My years as a secretary were formative and growing ones for me. Not only was I forced from my shell, I used my spare time to read books on missiology or do book studies. During those years I also went to Africa on life-changing mission trips. I was growing in the Lord and gaining an identity of my own. As my shyness melted away, it felt like I grew wings. God was precious to me. He was so good and kind that I wanted to serve Him with all my heart.

I eventually got married, oh wonder of wonders, to Jenna's brother-in-law and moved to her state, her church, and her locality. As it would be for most