

OMNIVISUM

literary magazine



who we are

For Sisters Facing Tough Shit

Written by Andrea Repetz

I'm here to say I see you.
Being a sibling in the wake of chaos is a position that often goes without recognition.
I just want to give you a pat on the back for weathering the layers of waves.

Because to be the sister of someone facing some of the world's toughest shit means a lot of things.
It means writing and rewriting this poem to try to share my narrative
Because she's facing it, but so am I.
It means picking up on patterns from when I was young— realizing that she always pushed her dessert onto my plate, and not just because she wanted to share.
Wondering, was I put at risk of becoming a fattened scapegoat?
It means expanding your vocabulary.
Writing research papers about eating disorders in order to stand firm with the facts.
Learning how to talk back to the voice in her head,
Building up the person but not affirming the mess.
It means hating fitness Youtubers.
It means deleting the fitness app that came with your phone.
It means refusing to ever understand caloric math.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

Andrea Repetz is a sophomore Creative Writing major, minoring in Professional Civic Writing & Leadership from New Cumberland, Pennsylvania. She started telling stories at her family's dinner table and never wants to stop. She is an optimist, helper, and hoarder of anecdotes.

New layer: Sister told the public.

It still looks like breakdowns in restaurants
And packing lunches to force into her hands before she can rush out the door
But it means I don't have to keep her cover anymore.

New layer: Sister had no chance to get her story straight with the boyfriend who was busted with the bottle he asked her to buy.

Now she's aware of her permanent record.
It means twenty-one doesn't look all that fun because its less damning to drink when you're younger.
It means trying your best to give legal advice, but all you can do is hug her.
It means the "it won't happen to me!" mentality will never apply to me
Because it can and it will happen to anyone, despite how it should be.
It means worrying how she'll pay tuition and rent on top of a fee.
It's an introduction to the acronym A.R.D:
Accelerated Rehabilitative Disposition
It means she turned to barstools to help her cope with the barristers.
It means I don't want to mention my dean's list when none of her credits stuck through the semester.
It means late night pep-talks on the phone telling her to just survive until summer.

New layer: Summer was a cold one.

It means being blessed to be interning in a different town,
But when I come home,
it smells like vodka at 11am.
It means not trusting that she would just take out the trash on her own.
It looks like thirty green cans crushed into a pillowcase.
It means a sudden intervention sends her into a long conversation with the hotline.
It means panicking while getting your hair done, praying at each red light because you realized that an hour of her being alone is long enough to do something stupid,
But she was smart that day.
Other dumb decisions came later
And look like replacing the beers from the neighbor's fridge before they can notice they're missing.
And stepping in as a human alarm clock when rum lips from the night before leave her unable to open her eyelids or form the words "good morning".

Being a sister facing tough shit means your first visit to the emergency room is not for your own injury.
Packing a bag for her in case she is admitted,
But crying when they tell you that she won't be.
She was only in there as a formality.
It's pulling aside the counselor to make sure the true story is shared,
Not just the story of the girl who is tired of sitting in the emergency room all day.
The counselor says thank you, but she'll need her own wakeup call.

New layer: Sister's wakeup call sounded like headlights smashing.

I had been shocked before,
But I never experienced shock until I was about to put my phone down
When a text from my mom sent digital letters sinking into my stomach.
My tear ducts flash frozen and I felt nothing.
Late night blue light isn't the way you want to hear the news that bad became worse.

It's falling asleep wondering who your one call from prison would be.
It's starting your own therapy.
Piecing together her mental process that was a failed coverup before it started.
It means making conversation with your shell of a sibling.
It means driving home a different way to avoid the bridge where there is still broken glass on the ground.
I didn't ask to see photos of the car until months later.

New layer: Sister has scars now.

On the 4th of July, I went to a party and watched fireworks. The next day was her community service to pick up the burnt wrappers from the spectacle.
It means game planning with her before the family reunion to explain school and sobriety without worrying the relatives.
It means knowing that sometimes a wakeup call appears to fall on deaf ears, but it just may need a few weeks of silence for it to settle.

But it still means I cannot be proud of her post-break up weight loss because I'm convinced it was the result of old habits.

It means having a bad taste in your mouth when your friends post weight loss pics.
I can't even be proud when they deserve it.
It looks like a Bible verse written on a sticky note: "The Lord is close to the brokenhearted", that has stayed stuck to our mirror for four years
And we still need it every day.
It means asking, heaven forbid, what if something ever happened to me?
It means keeping in line because at the very least, I can stay out of trouble. And I can obey requests when I'm home. I will paint the bathroom on my day off because my parents deserve that much.
It means not being eager for break to end so you can go back to school.
It means conversations pointed at the ceiling saying, "Okay, God. We've got this, right?"

New layer: When things get better, something else will come along.

Because I am a sister facing tough shit, I cannot break away from it.
I'm bound to the pain of loving a person who is a walking catastrophe.
I've given up all sense of where I stand in the world.
Do I exist in the world?
I want to be her keeper, but does she even see me? So, after each layer pours from my lips upon confidential ears who can process it
I am taken aback by hearing, "You're a really good sister"
"You're doing this right"
"I'm glad you came to talk to me"
"You can always come back to check in"

And just being told that brings tears to my eyes. So to the sisters facing
tough shit,
You're a really good sister,
And you can always come back to check in.
To those sisters—you have another sister in me.

