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## **The Red Pontiac**

The morning sun penetrated the windshield of the red Pontiac, blinding us in a sea of white light. We both released sounds of annoyance and pulled down the visors, creating a shaded escape. We rode in complete silence besides the rumble of the engine and “Ol’ English” playing softly through the speakers. Morning rides to school were always like this; both my brother and I too consumed in our own thoughts to care about the other’s existence. As we slowly came to a stop in front of a red light, something broke the suffocating silence.

“What will you do when I’m gone?” Jordan asked. This question interrupted my thoughts and ultimately threw me off guard. I turned and looked at him, then faced forward once again, banged my head on the headrest and sighed. I had forgotten that this was his last day of high school, our last car ride, because in just a summer’s time he’d be off for Eastern Washington University, and I would be alone for the first time in fifteen years.

Jordan and I never had a solid relationship. We fought constantly and sometimes wouldn’t talk for weeks at a time. I have no recollection of his presence in my life from fifth to eighth grade, almost four years. At the start of my freshman year, his senior, everything started to change with our morning drives to school. I remember the first day, sitting in his car, next to my own flesh and blood, and not knowing what to say. We were strangers, like two people forced to share a taxicab against their will. This kid was like an alien to me, unknown and unrelated.

Days passed by and slowly but surely things started to loosen up between us. We cracked jokes about the shivering, red-nosed kids standing half asleep at the bus stops. We fought over which music to play. I would change the song and Jordan, quickly snatching the iPod from my grasp, would change it back as if the universe depended on it. We would also recall old memories with each other, creating awkward silences, as well as wonderment of why we let our relationship deteriorate so vastly.

In the months to come our bond grew stronger and escaped the confinements of that old red Pontiac. When we were sitting around the dinner table, making jokes and quick witty comments, I was the only one to laugh at his, and he was the only one to crack a smile at mine. Whenever our parents challenged my views on something, Jordan was always taking my side. And I always took his in return. This was a common, silent agreement, of which we shared. When we talked, we never had to say much; it was as if we could read each other's mind. Surprisingly I had grown to love my brother again, but I would never let it show.

The light flashed green at the intersection. My brother accelerated with a look of eagerness, waiting to hear some mushy gushy response. And as much as I wanted to spill my guts out about how much I cared for him, my fears about him coming home a whole different person, and how crazy I would become without him, I didn't give him the satisfaction. So with a straight face, and nearly no emotion, I turned to him and plainly stated, "The question is..." I said, "What will you do without me?"

Now I wake up every morning and lumber into the bathroom I don't have to share anymore. I eat my fill without having to fight over every sugary snack. I don't have to kick and punch my way for some computer time, and I fall asleep in silence instead of the annoying

strumming of an electric guitar. Life seems to have taken a turn for the better. Except for when I make a joke and not even a chuckle is heard, or my opinions are constantly criticized. When I need someone to talk to but I know he's the only one that would understand. That's when I realize that I didn't know what I had until it was gone.