

# Family Ties

By Kristin Metz



The news spread like wildfire through the junior high school of our sleepy town; James Linder\* had just overdosed in his Earth Science class and was being rushed to the emergency room. Who is to blame? Emily Brollan\*, my cousin. She was the dealer who had provided him with the prescription medications that sent him to the hospital. As I was an inconsequential and unobtrusive eight-grader, the actions of my freshman cousin were an atom bomb on my sheltered life. Little did Emily realize that the blame would fall to her and she would be held accountable, losing the trust and respect of everyone around her.

Emily's actions resonated heavily in our lethargic town, and the impact was widespread. Although the over-

dose was not fatal, James' recovery time was not short. When he finally regained his full health, he found himself in serious legal trouble. This episode brought James' long history of drug abuse to the surface and he faced consequences similar to Emily's. Meanwhile, James' sister Tarah\* made it perfectly clear that she would thoroughly thrash anyone who played a part in the incident leading to her brother's downfall. Being raised in a wholesome environment by caring and communicative parents, this was a side of the world that I had never even seen. Now I was being thrown into it, headfirst. In order to save face, I denied any relation to Emily for years afterward out of embarrassment and shame.

Even though this experience is in the past, the consequences are still seen. Emily works a retail job that she loathes due to the poorer education she received at the alternative school, where the focus was graduating, rather than seeking the highest education possible. Due to these circumstances, Emily chose not to go to college or seek further training. It is doubtful that she ever will. Our relationship with that branch of the family has been distant since the incident. It is visibly harder for the adults to put their trust in Emily, when it was previously given without question. Up until that time, my parents had encouraged me to connect with Emily and revel in our family ties. However, they now do no such thing. I used to believe that she would eventually regain the trust and respect that she lost, but I see now that some bridges she burned will never be rebuilt.

It might be said that this is pop culture's fault, for promoting drug use and abuse, or the single mother's fault, for not knowing her daughter

well enough to see the danger signs. It might even be said to be the grandparents' faults for not monitoring their medications properly; however, I simply do not comprehend these justifications. Emily knowingly stole the drugs, distributed them to her peers with the full understanding of how they would be used, and therefore it is her fault. Fortunately, I wasn't the only one of this opinion.

I have never sympathized with Emily, believing our family's—and the school district's—censure of her was fair and just. This experience has reinforced all of the concepts and ideals that are drilled into us at school. I never want to end up in the same position as Emily or suffer those consequences. The disappointment in my parents' eyes and losing their respect would be a harsher blow than missing out on high school or even college. Although I planned to be drug—and alcohol—free before this experience, this nightmare strengthened that resolve and has reminded me over the years of the delicacy of trust. Life is about building and maintaining relationships, and you cannot have a relationship with someone if you cannot put your trust in them. Although my heart cries for Emily, my head realizes that this was an example of what not to do. I have learned from her mistake, and continue to make the right choices, allowing me to enjoy a full and fulfilling life.

*\*Names have been changed*

*The editors and staff of Alert Magazine wish to congratulate Amanda on winning the essay contest and encourage her in pursuing her academic goals. We would also like to encourage future seniors to participate in our scholarship program.*

*Sincerely,  
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