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ATYP LA 1

12 March 2013

To Laugh Like A Child Again

As I was looking through boxes of old pictures, I stumbled upon a picture of my aunt, Mariel, and I. It was a picture taken on the day of her wedding, at the reception. In the background I can see a table covered with a green and white table cloth, overflowing with presents, and my uncle drinking beer in the corner. In this picture, I am facing my aunt, holding her hands and laughing. I remember this day very well, how itchy my flower girl dress was, and how I kept getting compliments for my hair, which my mom had carefully and marvelously styled. I remember my aunt looking stunning that day, with an intricate and complicated hairstyle, and skin so radiant she seemed to be glowing. She was wearing beautiful pearl earrings, that I specifically recall hearing, were my grandmother's, and my mother had also worn them for her wedding seven years before.

All these details are so clear in my mind, but there is one that is missing. It is something that I now wonder every time I glance at this picture. What was I laughing about? What was so funny? These simple questions may seem irrelevant, but to me they have real meaning. I want to remember what the little girl in the picture was laughing about, eight years ago. Why? Because I want to laugh like that again. To laugh freely, with no one to criticize my laugh, or judge and snark about the things that I find joy in. I want to enjoy life as I did that day, when my biggest worry was whether I was going to be able to have a second slice of cake or not. I want to go back to that day, when my brother and I actually got along. When my aunts, uncles and relatives laughed and awwed over how cute we looked as we awkwardly danced together, and then continued to run around, playing our childish games.

That day, I felt like I was on top of the world, even though I wasn't being celebrated, and the party was certainly not for me. I danced and ran, skipped and bounced around, greeting everyone I could with my bubbly mood. I didn't care what anyone thought. I didn't mind when cousins pointed and stared as I came out of the bathroom, feeling free and relieved from my bothersome dress. I didn't care when my parents glanced disappointingly as I cartwheeled all over the room, bumping into people. I certainly didn't care when many turned their heads as I laughed hysterically, my giggles echoing loudly over the music and chatter. I just went right on prancing and dancing, as the mariachi band kept playing their lively and energetic melodies. As I keep growing older, I realize that I need that laughter, that delight in my life again. I need the key to living like a child again, and finding happiness in the smallest things. I cannot grasp what is necessary to fill that gap anytime soon, because I can't go back and ask myself why I was so lighthearted that day. The only thing that I can do is wait. Wait until I have my own children, and ask them what their secret is. The secret of youth, of happiness, of innocence and purity. Until they come, I must learn to stop being so judgmental, so coldhearted towards other people, and toward the situations I deal with. Everyday, I will glance at this snapshot, and keep searching for what I need, and perhaps I will be inspired to turn back, and be more like the little six-year old girl that everyone seemed to love, while still gaining the wisdom and knowledge of an adult necessary to be successful in life.