An Extrovert’s World

Caroline Mahon

Oh no. I spit in her face. I spit right in her face. Enunciated that “P” just a little too hard. Did she notice? Ok. Ok, she’s wiping her face…she definitely noticed.

“So anyways…are you going to play rehearsal later today?”

She just kept talking…without mentioning it. She just wiped my saliva off of her face without pointing it out. And that’s when I realized Emily was, and still is, one of the best people I know.

I had just been through a brutal, high school break-up. Didn’t really talk about it. Cried a lot. Felt like I only had a few friends. However, thanks to him, I was very involved in my high school’s theatre department. He was president of the drama club; and as girlfriend of the president of the drama club, I often ended up at auditions and Drama Club meetings.

Emily was a fellow theatre nerd. It is nearly impossible to meet her and not fall in love right away. Almost everyone in our high school was friends with her. She breaks out in different accents at random, she impersonates students from our high school, she loves the Muppets, reading, and Greek mythology. She has beautiful dark, curly hair and is short and spunky. One of her signature outfits is her Avengers t-shirt layered beneath an unbuttoned flannel shirt, jeans, and converse. Most importantly though, she has the ability to bring outsiders in. She can lift people from the lowest of lows and make them feel like they belong. One moment in particular really spurred my appreciation for her unique kindness.

While I was in the children’s play, Emily was in the Improvisation Troupe. (I was always way too scared to try out for the Improv Troupe. For me, improvisation is cruel and unusual punishment.) The two groups were trying to meet up after their separate rehearsals one night during senior year. I was only somewhat acquainted with Emily at this point. While driving to meet everyone at the mecca of Mexican cuisine, Chipotle, someone informed me via text that they had decided to leave Chipotle and go to an Improv trouper’s house. I couldn’t just show up to some random trouper’s house by myself, especially since my ex-boyfriend was going to be there. What if I didn’t know anyone once I got there? What if the few people that I was semi-acquainted with didn’t decide to go to the house? My lack of friends put me in a bit of a pickle for this one. At Chipotle I could’ve just grabbed a burrito and hit the road. But this made me too uncomfortable. I guess I could just go home and cry more?

Emily had heard that I was coming to Chipotle. When everyone else left, she waited. She waited for me. She could have left, but she didn’t. She waited for the girl that she sort of, kind of knew even though the rest of her friends were gone. Emily waited.

Emily’s patience goes beyond waiting for people at Mexican fast food chains. She always includes the new person. Her gift is so unbelievable and indescribable that written word cannot do it justice. If she is with a group of friends and a new face enters the group, she’s the first one to introduce herself, talk to the new person, make a goofy nickname for them. The nickname catches on. Everyone calls our new friend that nickname, and that new person feels welcome. Although I can’t be sure if she made up my nickname, I know that she loves to yell it: “Feefee.” Caroline became C-line became Feline became Feefee. Simple right? F-squared was a thing for about a week. It didn’t really stick…but I think I’m okay with that. I have the fondest memories
of her yelling down our high school’s halls. At the top of her lungs, she would replace the words “be mine” of that song “Be My Frankenstein” with “Feline”.

Emily’s ability to bring people in doesn’t end with nicknames. She asks people if they’re okay, she makes sure they get to talk every now and then, and she makes them feel like one of the group. Whenever I’m in a bad place, she’s the first to notice and then cheer me up. Her sense of humor has affected everyone at our high school in some way or another. She blew everyone away in our Variety show when she acted like a paranoid, neurotic Rapunzel in a comedy skit. Her dream job is to be a cast member on Saturday Night Live.

High school was like Emily’s playground. I remember Emily telling people to hold her hand and skip down the hallway with her. I’d be walking to play practice when suddenly I’d see her skipping down the hallway, flannel shirt flapping behind her, while she held the hand of a friend and sang something like “We’re off to see the wizard! The wonderful wizard of Oz!” I’d smile. Shake my head. And keep walking down the hallway. I’d hear her singing grow quieter as she skipped away. Then, at play practice I’d be greeted by a huge hug that lifted me off my feet. Emily hands out hugs like it’s her job. She’s just a goof enveloped inside a layer of unique and beautiful altruism.

I think that if a group of people were asked to say one word that best describes Emily, at least ninety percent of them would say outgoing. She screams outgoing. I, on the other hand, scream introversion. But I probably don’t scream it because I’m too shy.

I’ve always been a shy person. But I’d like to make a distinction between what I consider shy and what I consider quiet.

When you’re quiet, you are comfortable with your level of introversion. You enjoy keeping to yourself. You don’t feel the need to be goofy and loud. But when you’re shy, you want nothing more than to be loud and conversational, but something keeps you caged up in an introverted shell. The people around you will be talking, and in your head you form responses to what they’re saying, but your shyness prevents you from vocalizing your responses.

I’ve always had two personalities: one around close friends and family, and one around everyone else. With people my age, I’m typically timid and a bit more “normal,” than I am with loved ones. With people that are close to me, I’m not afraid to just act weird. To act like myself.

When I was younger, I was incredibly, incomprehensibly shy. Growing up shy just sucked. One of my childhood friends still mentions how her brother once asked, “Does Caroline ever talk?” I don’t enjoy when she mentions it.

We live in an extroverts’ world and being shy is a major crutch. Extroverts run the show. They are born with a gift that shy people will never have. Extroverts have a leg up in the job search, in social situations, in dating situations, and even in school. When you’re too nervous to ask anyone for homework help, guess what? You don’t get homework help. However, like Uncle Ben said to Spiderman: with great power comes great responsibility.

While some extroverts use their power for things like popularity, constant attention, and general asshole-ness, Emily uses hers to guide the introverts of the world. She gives them attention. She brings them into groups. She makes them feel comfortable enough to speak freely and without anxiety. She makes me feel like I belong.

To this day, Emily is one of my best friends. We’re complete goofs with one another. We reenact skits from Saturday Night Live, particularly ones that include Kristin Wiig. We sing in the car as she dances while driving, scaring me half to death. She once forgot the name of a song
we had sung in the car earlier that day. While I was at my job at an ice cream store, my manager, a friend of both me and Emily, handed me the phone and told me Emily was on the other line and apparently it was an emergency. I quickly grabbed the phone, and on the other line Emily was frantically asking, “What was that song we were singing in the car earlier today!??!” Big emergency. We dance at any and every given opportunity. This summer, we made a killer music video with my younger sisters to a song by One Direction. Emily has a thirty second dancing solo that definitely deems her Juilliard-worthy.

I love her so much. I know we’ll always continue to have the most fun times together. Seeing her when I arrive at a friend’s house always ensures a great, hilarious time. I know, without a doubt, that we’ll always be friends.

Emily did not cure my shyness. No one will ever do that. Timidity is a chronic burden for me that will never go away. It’s not a choice, and I don’t think most extroverted people understand that.

However, a few months ago, when I felt fed up with being shy, I started writing about it. I wrote down all the negative things about shyness. The negativity built itself up higher and higher. But then, I finally wrote something positive. I wrote that I’m growing out of my shyness every day. When I was younger, I couldn’t even talk to my grandparents without tensing up. But now, talking in classes, or in front of groups doesn’t affect me negatively. I can introduce myself to people. I can hold my own in discussions I’m passionate about. I can even strike up a conversation with a person working at a coffee shop. A lot of my growth has been because of theatre, but Emily helped me grow a lot, too. At a time when I only felt comfortable being myself around my family, Emily showed me that I could also let loose around people my age. That lesson alone has changed my life for good. I know we’ll be friends forever and that she’ll always make me, and others, feel like they belong.