

You Can't Steal Music

by Sam Kelly
Orange High School

I come home to the sound of piercing alarms and screaming. Hoping my possessions are secure, I trudge upstairs, where the screaming is clearer. Interrogations about from where and from whom it was stolen. Questioning how those fast hands went under the radar despite constant supervision. On special occasions, we may hear a confession. On really special occasions, the police may be involved. On all occasions, caution, responsibility, logic, tolerance, and sympathy must be applied and utilized.

My younger sister has Reactive Attachment Disorder due to adoption. She experienced multiple traumas before coming into our family, initially as a foster child. Because of this, she has a difficult time trusting people to be loving and caring, so she tests her guardians' patience. Theft is the most common way for her to do this. Defiance, attempting to annoy those around her, and rule-bending are other methods. My house has alarms or codes on every door and my sister is almost always in someone's line of sight, but she will find a way. Drama is inevitable. That's where music comes in.

I have been playing music for as long as I can remember and longer. Mainly, I play guitar and drums. I learned the guitar from my father, who learned it from his. There is no better escape from my sister's antics than music. Disappearing into blues, rock, or jazz makes reality vanish. I have not a care in the world when it's just me, the strings, and the sticks. Music cannot be stolen.

A couple of years ago, I decided to try to teach my sister to play guitar. I thought it would establish a special connection so that when I played to take away my worries, it would remind me of the good in her. However, her devotion to the idea was lacking and I found that it didn't help me establish connection; it made playing music raise thoughts of her at times when I would rather think of anything else.

Yet, music didn't let me down. A while later, I was home alone and I decided to explore the deafening sounds of the alarms on the doors of my house. I studied the rhythm and intervals and composed a piece of music in which the backbone of the tune was exactly the sound of the alarm. Now, when I hear an alarm, instead of freaking out about whose room my sister has gone into this time and what I'll have trouble finding later, I can take a moment to head bang. This release calms me and gives me the patience to connect with her.

My sister is more than a thief or an adopted kid with issues. Music has helped me realize and come to terms with that fact. She is bright, talented, and comical, and has taught me patience, understanding, and perseverance. Even at the worst of times, you can't steal music.