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College Supplemental Essay

May 19th, 2013 marks my last violin performance of that year, and more notably, the best performance of my life. It was the last orchestra concert for the year and the hall was packed. Spotlights glared down on us. It was time for our last piece, Aaron Copland's "Variations on a Shaker Melody". The piece had its swells and dips, but the violin part was relatively boring to me. With one minute left, the big crescendo approached. When it finally came, words cannot describe how I felt. My fingers raced across the fingerboard; the bow slid over the strings like a saw cutting wood. The sudden thump from the timpani made my heart beat out of my chest. In that moment of excitement, my violin did all the talking for me. It expressed all of the strong, passionate emotions I was feeling. When the piece ended, I saw my violin and I as the perfect team.

When I first picked up a violin at the age of six, it almost immediately felt like my second sister. When my stereotypically strict Filipino parents put me in violin lessons that year, I rebuffed. Just as an older brother regards his annoying little sister, I didn't want to be near my violin. I didn't want to practice with it—I just wanted it to go away. Of course, as with all siblings, my violin and I have had our ups and downs throughout my eleven years of playing. By the time I was seven, we were making audiences roar at local Baroque festivals. I recall times when her perfect pitch would push through orchestra auditions. Still other times her strings would spontaneously go out of tune during a concert recital, or her strings would break in the middle of a lesson.

Like any brother and sister, we've grown up together. As I started to grow, so did she. My voice deepened, and I started to mature. Likewise, she's gone from a quarter size to a half size, finally blossoming into a full size. Her sound has become richer, her appearance becoming a darker tint of brown, and her playing experience grows every day. She—simply calling her just "my violin" does not suffice—has always been there for me. So, let me tell you more about her.

I named her Alexis, after my first violin teacher. I provide the movements and the articulation, and she provides the sound. Our relationship has lasted eleven years and we will never stop growing. Sometimes she's difficult and doesn't want to cooperate with me. However, when we work together as one, the result is pure euphony. When I'm on-stage, she's the only one who's right there next to me; and after tuning her A string, she says to me, "We got this, Matthew."

While Alexis has watched me grow into a hardworking student and passionate player, I, in turn, have watched her become my second sister. We share a special bond. Some say that it's the people around you who influence you the most, and I'm proud to say that my ersatz eleven-year-old sister impacted my life far more profoundly and personally than anyone else. Without my talent and passion for violin, I wouldn't experience the true richness of being complete.

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