

# a\*gap\*e: selfless love

Molly Wells  
*Butler University*

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## **a\*gap\*e: selfless love**

*Molly Wells*

I've been in school for 13 years of my 18 years of life. Most of what I've learned has come from outside of the classroom.

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“Come on Molly!” Mom shouted. “We have to take your brother to school.”

“I wanna go to school too!” I replied.

“You will. Just not now; you're not old enough.” We all piled into the car, Mom strapping me into my car seat. As the buildings flashed past, I thought about what school would be like. I imagined it was a wonderful collection of people who made friends and did cool stuff. I bet it would be like a form of heaven – complete with every good thing: cupcakes, crayons, friends, and finger paint.

We stopped in front of a tall brick building not too far away from our apartment in Baltimore. Mom unbuckled herself and then came around to my side. We walked in side-by-side. Josiah, Mom, then me. Josiah was carrying a backpack, oh how I longed for a backpack! Mom talked to some adults, and they introduced Josiah to some kids.

“Molly, say bye to Josiah, we have to leave now!”

“Bye, Siah!” I said as I waved.

“Bye!” replied the bright-eyed 5 yr. old boy. His back turned to us as he entered a room filled with books, colors, and young minds.

The car ride back felt empty. “Mom, when is Siah coming back?” The past 5 minutes had felt like 5 years without him.

“We pick him up in a few hours,” she replied.

“How about we go to Dunkin Donuts?”

“Yay! Can I get a jelly donut?”

\*

I lay on the floor of our apartment in King of Prussia, PA uncontrollably sobbing. My brother ran around looking for random items he'd forgotten to pack earlier. The reality of the situation hadn't hit me until now – and apparently, I wasn't ready for it.

“Come on, Molly. Get off the floor,” My mom had been consoling me this whole time, but even she had had enough.

Josiah came into the room. “Hey Molly, do you want these sunglasses?” He handed me a pair of multicolored sunglasses.

“Do you not want them anymore?” I asked as I wiped the tears from my face.

“No. I think I got them in Germany, but they're yours if you want them.”

“Thanks. You know I'm going to miss you.” I said.

“I knowww. I won't miss you though.” He said, jokingly.

“I know that too,” I chuckled.

Tomorrow was the day that we took my brother to college. He would only be a three hour drive away (he was going back to Maryland), but I still didn't like the idea of being the only child at home. Josiah and I had a weird relationship. We haven't always been super close, we were at one point, but we've sort of drifted apart as we got older. Yet no matter how little we interact, there's always been a bond between us. Maybe it's just because we're related. I think it's because we've grown up in the same environment. We've experienced a lot of the same ups and downs. Although, often, he experienced the downs before I did because he's older.

I put on the sunglasses to hide the tears.

\*

I loved the smell of Dunkin Donuts. I always got a jelly donut and never wanted to try anything else. I knew what I liked. Why would I risk finding something I didn't like?

Mom and I were sitting at a table by the window when someone ran in and said, “Turn on the TV.” I thought this was strange but didn't pay any attention to it. However, the workers turned the TV on, and I heard gasps as hands flew to mouths.

The Dunkin Donuts got dead silent, and I didn't know why. I just kept eating my jelly donut. Mom hurriedly gathered our things and shuffled me outside to the car. She called my dad, but he didn't pick up, because he was at work.

“Mommy, what’s wrong?” I asked, unsure of what to do.

“I’m not quite sure yet, Molly. We just have to get home.”

\*

My brother’s first day of preschool was on 9/11/01. I remember dropping my brother off, but not seeing the Twin Towers fall to the ground on the flat screen TV. People all over the world were concerned for their loved ones; I just wanted to go to school. It’s crazy how the world works that way.

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Familial love is something very complex. Most people have a love-hate relationship with their family members. But no matter how much we may hate them in the moment, we realize in our core that we love them. It is a layered love.

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I’ve never been in love.

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“Who do you like?! If you tell me, I promise I won’t tell anyone.” I assured my best-friend, Molly H.

“Ugh, fine.” A moment of silence.

“It’s Nathan,” she said. I gasped then giggled.

“No way! Guess what?” I asked.

“What?”

“I like Nathan too!” Go figure we like the same person. Our school of 22 people only had 2 guys in grades 5-7.

“Really?” Molly looked at me with wide eyes. We both burst out laughing.

“Hey, Molly? I want you to know though that if he likes you too, I won’t be mad. I’d want you to be happy.” The words were hard to get out, but they were out now, and that’s what mattered.

“Thanks. I want the same for you too,” Molly replied.

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My friends and I joke about how we just want a nice guy to date. But in reality, we want

more than that. We want to fall uncontrollably in love with someone who loves us unconditionally. I'm not even sure that exists. I think it's possible to love someone through thick and thin, but love is not always pretty. I'm looking for someone who is willing to go through the ugly with me and come out real on the other side, much like what God has done for us through Jesus' death.

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Molly and Nathan "dated" in 6th grade. Nathan and I "dated" in 9th grade. I don't think it was love on either side.

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I've always loved the Twilight series. I get a lot of crap for it, but there's something beautiful about the love shared between Bella and Edward. I'll admit the writing isn't the greatest, the acting can be cheesy, and it is entirely strange that Jacob falls in love with Bella's baby. However, the love that Edward and Bella have is unbreakable, no matter what they do. I've fallen in love with their love story.

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The nerves were bubbling up inside me. I took a deep breath.

"You're going to be great, Molly. Don't worry about it." My friend reassured me.

"Thanks, Melody." It was opening night of the ballet, Sleeping Beauty, and I was Aurora that performance.

"Can I see everyone in Jewels over here for a second?" One of our dance instructors shouted backstage. Melody and I, along with the other girls in Jewels headed over towards her voice.

"Guys. The ending in Jewels is not good. I mean it looks like... poop. We're changing it and making it easier. Girls on the end, do a sousu instead of an attitude." We all knew she was down-playing how she really felt, which made things worse. This was not what I wanted to hear 15 minutes before I went on stage. To hear that some of my dancing looks like shit is never a good thing to hear before a performance. This teacher had always been passive-aggressive, but to say something like that to a graduating senior right before she performs one of the biggest roles she's ever danced seemed a little too far. The nerves burst.

It was then that I learned to not let everything go to my head. If I hadn't chosen to ignore the negativity that accompanied what she said, the show probably wouldn't have gone as well as it did.

I understand that constructive criticism is a good thing, and I'll take all the corrections I can get. However, if I dwell on my shortcomings too much, my life begins to feel like just that – a shortcoming. Then I lose motivation to try and improve, because it feels impossible. As soon as I decided not to care what my dance instructor thought of me, I felt a wave of relief. I could now work on the corrections for myself rather than for her. This has been a continual struggle – one which has followed me to college. Every day, I have to remind myself that I'm dancing for myself and the audience, not my teachers. After all, who cares what they think when I am accepted by the God of the universe?

“Got it.” I said.

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Dance is one of my passions, one of my loves. I have a relationship with it just like I have relationships with people. Dance and I define a love-hate relationship. Yet, just as with familial love, at the core it is pure love.

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A lot of my most memorable moments in life involve tears. I realized this as the tears streamed down my face for the thousandth time.

“I just don't see a hunger for dance in you,” One of my dance professors said.

I couldn't respond to this partly because I was hyperventilating with snot coming out of my nose, partly because I couldn't understand how this professor didn't see the obvious love and passion that fills me when I dance.

“I mean, you have to ask yourself this question, Molly. You have to ask yourself if dance fulfills you. You need to be satisfied when you dance.” This last part threw me for a loop. I have always loved dancing. I feel right when I dance. I feel at home. But I do not see dance as the end-all-be-all. If it was, then my life would be pretty depressing.

“I'm sorry, I feel like the room is spinning. I just wasn't expecting to talk about this kind of stuff today. What time is it?” I managed to say.

“Um, 12:59. You better get to rehearsal.”

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In my life, the greatest love of all is not love of family, friends, significant others, or passions. All of these loves stem from one greater love. This love is not a love-hate relationship. This love is all love. It is the love of God.

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“My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you.” John 15:12

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The most important thing I’ve learned in my eighteen years is love.