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A.P. Literature and Composition

Mrs. Rutan

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The Outsider

*Blood.*

That was the first thing I saw that morning when I awoke to the traumatizing screams of my mother and sister and the disobedient barks of a dog I didn’t really know.

It was supposed to be a normal Wednesday in the summer of 2013. My brother would go off to summer school; my mom would get up with Buddy, the foster dog, and let him out of her room to wander, then leave to go to work; my sister would be up at the same time as the two of them because she doesn’t really know what, “sleep” is. Me? I would wake up hours later and put the rambunctious foster dog out on the chain with his bowl of food and water—which was pointless seeing as to how he always chewed up the water dish creating holes to let the water drain into the parched grass, and tipped his pale outstretched snout down to knock over his food bowl. Of course, I’d be anxious of the scratches I’d receive, or the long ever-lasting howls I would hear all throughout the day due to his loneliness. Later I would have spent the day relaxing, or I would have gone swimming, or I would have seen one of my friends or boyfriend, or I would have gone to work if I was called in. **Would** have.

*∙ ∙ ∙*

*7:32 A.M.* My mom stampedes up the stairs to get ready for work but her hypocritical self didn’t think of the other people in the house who were still trying to sleep. I roll my mixture of red and tan sun-kissed body back over to bring myself back into a peaceful deep sleep.

*7:35 A.M.* Screams. The strain of my sister’s voice flooded the house; an alarm clock telling me I had only been in a restful state for a moment. You have got to be kidding me. My head spun in the early hours of the morning that I hadn’t been familiar with since school had ended in June.

My head twisted to the medium, gentle, white canine laying on the floor facing the closed door with her ears perked up, in alert, and annoyed, I thought to myself, “What is she freaking out about, oh my god.”

…she spilled something…

…somebody scared her…

“MOM!!! AAAAAAAAAGGGGGGGGGHHHHHHHHHH! MOM!!” and the sound of screaming and the cry for my mother continued.

…a spider…

Here comes my mother still being obnoxious and yelling as I’m supposed to be sleeping.

“What?!” she dragged out.

Quickly and spat out as fast as my sister could, “HELP! MOM, HURRY…STOP!”

She blew through the staircase as I just sat there. I didn’t move—I wanted to, but I didn’t. I stared at the alarm clock which was facing the warm bed I should have been enveloped in. **Should** have.

My gaze switched to my precious, white furred canine whom would protect me from anything—the obedient dog of the two—who was now looking back at me. My head pondered the things my sister could be screaming about at 7:35 A.M.

Today was garbage day…she could’ve accidently put something in there she needed…but I couldn’t think of a single thing that she would’ve needed my mom’s help with. My brother had just gone outside to get on the bus.

Nothing.

Nothing I could think of would explain the wails coming from below my room. My mom reached the bottom of the stairs and it all started up again.

“STOP. LET GO!...BUDDY, STOP!!” my sister screamed.

My mother’s voice practically took control when she quickly yanked out the word, “STOP!!!”

Screams.

The mortifying screams of my sister that morning is something that will stick with me forever. It sounded like death was creeping its way into the air and filling the house. The yelling began once more.

“STOP IT, PLEASE!!”

The emotion in my mom’s voice was something I haven’t felt in forever. The faint sobs that were jailed behind her voice hooked your heart into wanting to cry for her. It made your heart fall hopelessly into your stomach. The sickness I felt at this point wasn’t something I could merely even describe; sickness and confusion. Racing thoughts, with endless loses. That’s all my head was capable of thinking.

“PLEASE! PLEEASE, BUDDY PLEASE!”

The pleading bled through her lips and all I could do was hear it. My face was probably pale at this point; the color of summer was lost in the pigmentation of my skin.

“What is going on?” I uttered as I sat on my heightened bed.

Of course I’m the one to ask as I’m talking to a dog…then the one to *keep* talking to a dog.

“Should we go see…do you wanna go see Cassie?”

My mother’s voice interrupted, “BUDDY PLEASE, STOP. LET GO!!”

My sisters screaming voice and the wails of my mother mixed in the stubborn air.

“STOP IT!” My mother screamed, “LET GO OF MY CAT!”

That got me.

I still had no clue what was going on, nor at this point was I sure I even wanted to know. I had always said that I hated our cats, but the thought of anything happening to them scared me. It’s almost pathetic it took so long for me to realize. But hey, you don’t realize what you have until it’s gone—or almost gone—right?

The screaming repeated and my mind was totally lost. Yes, the screams beat me up, but the sound of horrific crying from my mother and sister sat deep in my stomach. I lost focus staring at my dog until all that filled my eardrums was the sound of my name. My name was on repeat. I should have got up at this point, but I didn’t. My legs were locked and the thought of going downstairs and seeing something my mind couldn’t even make up was mentally straining. The prisoners in my mother’s voice broke free when I heard my name next. A mixture of heart wrenching tears and, “Sam.”

*7:44 A.M.* The clock stared me blank in the face as I darted out of bed and easily opened the wood door that would transfer me into what sounded like my mom and sister’s worst nightmare. All I could hear was the crying and the heavy panting of an excited dog. When I turned down the stairs and reached the landing, I found my mother. I tried to look at her face. I tried. I tried to ignore all of the blood stained on her shirt and shorts, the blood smeared down her legs, the speckles of blood on the floor and etched across her feet, and the splot of blood against her forehead. I know I should have looked her in the face and ignored the obvious for her. I didn’t though. I **should** have.

It wasn’t just the blood however. It was the phone call. The phone pierced to her ear as she held her hand that was covered in a white rag with deep red polka dots that I had never seen before.

“Yes, he attacked my daughter and I,” you could tell she was trying to hold her breath so she could talk to the 911 operator clearly but the tears drained down her face, “and he killed my cat..he just killed my cat.”

“Please go help your sister.”

I finished my way down the stairs keeping my eyes only in front of me—scared of the things my eyes could capture—except for the encaged animal that my eye caught a glimpse of I thought had always looked like oak and was meant to be named Oakley, but wasn’t. His name was Buddy. I’d only known him for two weeks—that day exactly—and he had just killed my cat. We were trying to do something good for him, and he killed a member of our family.

When I reached the monkey decorated bathroom and found my sister sitting in front of the mirror, I peeled up her hand and saw the gash cutting down and across her arm. I saw the flesh on the top of her arm torn and yanked. I saw another gash that was just pouring blood. I couldn’t help myself any longer.

“Who’d he kill?” the tremble in my voice I hadn’t felt since I was eight years old at my Papa’s funeral.

All I got for what seemed like minutes was her face looking down and her hand and a towel wrapped around her arm. She wouldn’t look at me. This didn’t tell me anything because we only had two cats—her cat and mine. So her reaction didn’t read either way.

“Nevaeh.”

I looked at her—you have got to be kidding me.

Mine.

All I wanted was to throw up. I should have stayed and helped my sister. I should have been stronger for her. I should have been stronger for my mother. I should have done the simple task my mom asked of me, but I didn’t. I ran. I ran back up the stairs and reached the tip of the stair case when I felt I had lost it. My knees gave in and I was squatting on the floor and my emotions fled. It only lasted for a short a minute until I picked myself up and told myself that it hadn’t just happened. I should have held it in. I should have stayed with my broken sister. I should have taken the phone from my mom so she could help herself. I **should** have. But I didn’t.

I passed the panting, caged oak colored dog as my mouth took control and uttered, “You piece of s\*\*\*.”

My mom and sister were sitting on the porch and again all my eyes could notice was the blood. The blood that had gotten in my mother’s hair. The blood I had seen on my sisters arm. The blood that covered my mother from head to toe.

Once the ambulance came, and the cop arrived to order animal control I was ordered to take my sister and mother to the hospital by the coincidental family friend who had just so happened to be driving the ambulance.

When we were alone again, my mom asked if I would go get her a pair of socks before we went to the hospital. This is again where I know that I should have gone and asked the simple favor my mother had asked, but I didn’t. I knew now that my dead cat was lying on the living room floor and I knew myself enough to know that if I went in that house I would have to see her. And if I saw her, that would be it. I would have gotten the article of clothing for her. I would have done it without a word. I **would** have. But I couldn’t.

*9:08 A.M.* The phone calls began. First it was my father, then my grandmother, then my mom’s best friend. I answered them the best I could, with the clearest voice possible.

The repeated, “How are they doing?” with the constant reply, “stitches” each time.

Then the, “I am so, sorry.”

Immediately after the ER visit we had to race home to meet animal control whom would retrieve the dog we barely knew. As I sat in the car as animal control was in my house with my mother, I just sat there in the cherry red Durango with my sister and her lacerations wrapped in a “skin colored” wrap. I tried not to cry. The whimpers of breaths I couldn’t hold in, fell. I tried. I knew she had it worse. I knew SHE was the one attacked by a dog she had been living with for two weeks, I knew she was the one that saw it all begin and she was alone, I knew she was the one who had to watch it all unfold. But I was selfish, and I knew it.

*10:26 A.M.* As animal control pulled away, so did my sister. I sat there alone. I sat there and fell apart. Everything was coming. I was crying because my cat that I had found almost dead that we nursed back to health, was now sitting in my garage wrapped in a towel dead. I was crying because my gray and black cheetah print cat with a white stomach was gone forever. I was crying because it was my idea to get the dog and save it from its abused past life. But even worse, I was crying because of Buddy. I was crying because he was locked in a cage alone again like he had been for his entire life except for the past two weeks, because he never really had a family like every dog deserves, because he didn’t know what he was doing, because I was fighting with myself between hating him and loving him so much I couldn’t let him go.

*10:48 A.M.* I had finally stopped and as much as I hated it, I could feel the needly, tingling under my eyes resting on my cheekbones from the salted tears that landed everywhere—my shirt, my shorts, my hair, my neck, and my mouth. When I went in the house I was met with a hug from my mom.

It was the way that she hugged me. Her arms around my face and my neck smashed right into the upper right of her body. Her extra height and my lack of it. It was the silence that was only interrupted by tears, and wheezing. And finally, it was the I’m sorry that barely graced my ear.