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Notes From the Editor...

The Promethean is in its third year of publication. With each year and issue the journal is growing. I hope that it will continue to grow and become an integral part of Concordia. This journal is a valuable means for Concordia students, staff and friends to share their creativity. I hope that all who read this issue will enjoy its contents and find a piece with which to identify.

I would like to congratulate Bennett Tracy Huffman for winning our staff over with his poem. The poem A Jiifto for Somalia is the recipient of the $25 prize for this issue. I would also like to thank everyone who contributed to this issue. All of the works submitted are given careful evaluation and I appreciate everyone who is brave enough to let the staff critique their work. I must make a personal apology to Gary Altman, Greg Bye, and Lynn Drake. The essays that they submitted are not included in this issue due to a virus on the disk which contained their contributions. Please look for their essays in the next issue.

Enjoy!

Emily Junken
Editor-in-chief

A Jiifto for Somalia

I stand on the hood, my broken down lorry
Belching steam, my dark hand shielding out the sun,
Absorbing its unusual warmth, searching
For the blue sea, for any prayer of rain.
Milk from the loins of a camel would be nice,
But the land has chased them away, off the mountains,
Back into the desert for which they are made;
Chased the oxen, hyena, and all. Not enough water
In the wells. The Shebelle River camps are at war,
On the run, a conflict born like killing a snake.
Where are the dark gums of the girl that I love?
Allah preserve me, my petrol tin is empty.
No one works this road anymore; there is too much fear.
I would sing this lament from the back of my horse
But I ate her years ago, when the pattern
O rain grew less merciful, and the gunmen grew
Up on the land, like a melon vine sprouting
Gourd after terrible gourd. Beneath the stars
I felt the bullet rip, metal to metal,
Through my truck's body. Wishing for something more
Fulfilling than rice, my heart beats like a lion
Falling softly to sleep, noble and calm. As long
As my clansmen need me, I must at least try
To help make the run from desert to coast
Are all of our leaves falling from the tree on the moon?
Say: 'So strange the way the thing we want most is that
Which pleases us least.' When the rains don't come,
Like a lost ancestor, in the short rainy season,
All years seem like winter; the time that presents
Our hardest face; the time the white men return;
The time we die from being too well fed.

Bennett Tracy Huffman
The One Who Reached From a Different Angle

In the forest, yet standing alone;
Only one, in a crowd of others;
Yet different, among those the same:

They are all like different trees,
Growing all alike.

I grow from a different seed,
A stranger to the others.
They, who grow like the Alder
Straight and tall.
But it is them
Who look all the same.

No! I will be like the one
who is different.
For I too, reach for the light
but from a different angle.

And if I grow to be gnarled
and different,
There may be some who walk by
and scowl at the way I am.

As they walk on,
Past the forest,
For all the beautiful trees there were,
Guess who will be remembered.

Sarah Arndt, Age 12
Within

When will there ever be enough time and patience
to live and learn
to see ourselves as being free

The start of life is just a dream
until the ocean roars
from the incoming tide
the light shines down on the flowing stream

Awakened with fear
but reassured by his love
and held on through the night
as the stars glimmer together

Holding on
reaches the lonely heart together
with his dream we bring love forever
and a chance of fall free alone in his hands

A child can learn and live
through the promise of a colorful rainbow
life with love and support
with our strength it is our will to give

The sky reflects our tears
that flow to the beaches
of our lives to fulfil God

What is written in a song
has been suffered in a life
creates that song of harmony
to grasp death by his love
as we are weak
can be blessed by God
life long

Ann Gerlach

Jesus, Jamie, and Ann

We smiled together,
but it wasn't enough
Our hearts are shattered,
knowing we need each other.
It will never be the same.

There was a reason, just as
waves splash against the rocks,
ever knowing what to expect,
even though the shadows dip
into the valley of mountains.
One day, you and I can
walk the path
held by the love he suffered for us.
That certain love was for you
and you shared it with me.

I love you!

Ann Gerlach
Fairy Tale

I sometimes wish that dreams were real
and not just there for the world to steal.
My life goes on and it seems so unfair that love
is sweet, but leaves me so incomplete. I dream so long but to no avail. All I
want is the fairy tale. People pass by without raising an eye and I want so
much to be part of their lives. But they
walk on and I'm only a passing thought.

Tamara James

Untitled

Caught in the twisted wreck of a decaying heart
Funeral ashes burn my throat and singe my eyes
My spine bleeds as blood forms the nauseating form of my
wretched existence
Hold me in your scraping arms as my fangs penetrate your
vein
Let us come together in unholy wedlock, sucking your sweet
honey from its hive
Blood stains my teeth as I taste your sweet lips, my soul
enters your eyes
Heading downward in a blackened grave, your breath burning
my skin enter me as I swallow you whole drawing you closer
to me
Peel my skin away and stare into the scabbed heart of the
real me

Peter Panagakos
The Gardener

She tends with care a little yard,
And holds the world with disregard,
For it has given her no part.
Her garden is a secret place,
Where she can shed her world face,
And none has sought her there with grace.
Her stride upon the drying lawn
Is purposeful, her hold upon
Her garden tools is always strong.
Her feet are brown with dust and dirt,
Her nails chipped, her fingers hurt
And blistered from her summer work.
Her hair is parched, her skin is dry,
Her lips are cracked, her lonely cry,
My only song—for she is I.

Lorien M. Edman

I Am Alone

I am alone
and if I only knew
how to say hello
I would not
be standing here alone
and I would greet you at the door.

I say hello
but though I know your name
I do not yet know
who you are
or who you try to be
I am afraid to ask you more

If I dared ask
what would the answer be
do I want to know
is the fear
that grows inside of me
something that I can ignore

Are you the friend
that I am longing for
or is acquaintence all you want?

Lorien M. Edman
What Do You Think?

What do you think behind your scowl, unkind words, mean and foul?
Begone, begone, you dare not touch me, but your eyes linger and still you watch me.

Why do you deign to give me notice? Acknowledge me not! You should not see this, and your friends, your friends, what will they think? Look to them, but do not sink.

Those are my words: you heed them not. My Eyes wander. Why do you meet them?

Now you turn to your friends with a silly smile. What have you thought all this little while? Do you think I am laughing only at you? I laugh and stare at others, too.

But you are the only one that turns, the only one that sees. It burns to watch you watch me back. Watch me not. Watch me not.

Lorien M. Edman

The Vigil

What is the reason for the watch I kept, Hourly after the hour?
Late last night, when darkness crept into her midnight tower--the blade red rays of the digital clock one, then two, then three--pierced my dreams like a crowing cock then four, then five, then free at six I woke, and my long dreams fled, I wondered why I had watched.

A war was won when I crept out of bed though the war in my dream was then lost.

Lorien M. Edman
The Sun Spends All Day Setting

The fairest day of Autumn called me out to work again, so I was in the garden planting next year's iris when an old forgotten woman stopped to say hello to me. She told me of her Summer years when she was young and free. Tomorrow I will watch for her and listen to the wise and wonderful stories of Summer days and other times, but, one day, I will look for her and she will be gone for the sun spends all day setting when September passes on.

Lorien M. Edman

Mama

Mama
you so pretty
in yo' dress made of rubies
going out
your hair all done,
make-up caked on
like the grease in our frying pan--
neither one is ever washed clean.

Mama
I look up at you
yo' babies cryin' for you
as you walk away
face another night "on the town."
Men call you Baby
and they ask you how much
and you don't even care.

Mama
why you do dat?
Why you think they need you so?
Is it the swish of wide hips,
the rise of your chest,
the bruises you earn
from a man we call Daddy?
Mama, why you go?

Mama
you so pretty.
We need you, too, Daddy say.
Even yo' tattered ruby dress
Mama, listen to me
I yo' chil'.
Mama, we ever be free?
Mama? Mama!! Where you be?

Amanda Van
Carried and Committed

My King, my Lord, the Prince of Peace,
When will His mercy and overflowing love cease?
He holds me, He teaches me,
In His ever tender arms,
Soothing my fears, my mortal alarms.
He guides me through rough and rocky roads,
And carries my too-large, too-heavy loads.
I must listen to His voice,
Learn to cherish His words,
It’s all a matter of my own, pure choice.
He opens his arms, and expects me to choose.
If I don’t accept, I’ll be the one to lose.
It won’t be easy, but He’ll guide me along,
With a psalm in my heart, in my heart... a song.

My Savior, My Counselor, My Jesus, My Lord,
I give you my heart for you alone to mold.
O zealous God, take me to You,
Pierce my being, through and through.
Give me a mission, a work, a place,
So when the time comes, I will see Your face.
I’ll see Your pierced side, Your hands, and Your feet
And Face to face, together we’ll meet.
You’ve known me from the beginning, my Creator, My God.
All of You is holy, not a part is fraud.
I’ll kneel before You, I’ll Kiss Your feet,
I cannot remove Your sandals, or touch Your seat.
You’ve given me life.
You’ve breathed in my soul.
You’ve given me a heart; You’ve made me whole.

Harmony Hart Grant
Wet

Rain collides with cement
As damp Portland air slowly
Rests its weight on the shoulders
Of the night.

Randy Bush

Drown Me

Torment me.
Crush and heal me with
Words scalded and purified by the
Sweet acid of your lips.
Drown me.
Resurrect me from this
Muddled torment.
Drag me miles beneath the
Chestnut sea of
Your gaze, and
Fill the empty rooms of
My heart with your
Presence that rises and clings like
Bright sea foam.

Randy Bush
Endings and Beginnings

It was time.
You must hurt to have done it,
to close a door which hung so long
Ajar
On fragile hinges.
Hinges--
No time to oil them,
Even at their beckoning.
No energy left to widen the doorway
Even by inches.
Small wonder
You pushed it shut
Before the pins gave way.
But what you sought was not
Behind the door.
The union could not be.
Marriage is a trinity:
Union of two hearts
Promises on parchment
Vows in view of God.
One or two without the others,
Incomplete.

No blame--
No right or wrong,
You couldn't drop me neatly
in the frame you hoped defined me,
The formula you carry deep within.
Here I am:
It's me, just me--a mirror,
an ill-fitting photo for a blind,
sterile frame.
Best to throw the frame away
and toss the empty pedestal aside.
For glass uncracked is rare
and stone unmarred, the same.
Cast them off together, these fancies
false and cruel;
the cage and frame
forbidding freedom and renewal.
Your letting go
releases me from pedestal, frame,
and cage--
To rise on time-torn wings
but vision true.
No tears--
shed none for us.
Cry for greatest joy,
cry for deepest sorrow.
No tragedy,
no sorrow here:
We see the way we ought not go.
The greatest tragedy?
If we did not see,
If we did not know.
Keep searching.
Allow your heart to recognize
what it is you most desire.
And when you find it,
I pray--
I truly pray
the time is right
for tow,
not one.

Beginnings

Suzy Kopetski
Penetration

Peaceful waters lie still but
Anger subsists submerged just Beneath the surface.
Meaning is absent.
Searching is frustration
And in the end the swells of horrid truths
Break deliberately on the shore and Dissipate—only to regenerate— Into unrelenting waves of monstrosity.

Rosy swarms of krill
Surface at sunset
Creating a kaleidoscope of color.
Kinetic dancing lures their killer...
Behold!
The Beast of the blue
Who rises to
Swallow the swarm
In a gulp to large to comprehend!
Creating a diabolical leader, Babo.

Naughty boys in New York pools get
Nasty under water.
They grope and grab and poke and stab and pinch and touch and Whoops there it is!
Peaceful waters lie still
With an occasional swell.
The serpent lives
Submerged beneath the surface
Disguised as man
Stalking the streets.
Smelling fleshy prey.
The Lakewood Spur Posse
Pierce young women and are
Rewarded with a hundred points
And a thousand dollars from The Home Show.
Spurs of serpents dig deep
Into soft flesh
Deep enough to kill
But peaceful waters lie still.

Jennifer Close
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High Myth &
The Failed Hero in
Melville's Benito Cereno
by Randy Bush

Author's note: For those not immediately familiar with this wonderfully dark Melville piece (as I was not before last year) here's a little map: Amasa Delano is a Spanish American ship's captain who finds a seemingly derelict vessel and, discovering life, goes aboard to offer help. The story, based on an actual account of a bloody slave revolt aboard a ship, is one of incredible tension and dread as the surviving crew members attempt to signal help while under the scrutiny of their African "masters." Don Benito Cereno, captain before the rebellion, is now a pawn of the slaves' diabolical leader, Babo.

Let me say, immediately, that my purpose herein is neither to address racial motifs nor to argue the point of Babo's being in command or Benito Cereno's being, like Bartleby, unable to face a real presence of evil. Any Melville bibliography will yield a half-dozen or so pieces that deal with either theme. And nearly every article or anthology I've found has examined resemblances between Don Benito and Charles V and between the "black friars" of the San Dominick and the real Dominican black friars of the Inquisition.

I will argue that to approach Benito Cereno as an example of "high" myth (or myth that draws upon universal archetypes), to take another look at it from, say, a "Campbellian" angle, is at least as important as its more common interpretations. For this reason, then, while I applaud the relevance of studying Melville's many allusions to outside persons, places, and events, except for brief acknowledgment of them, most will be ignored.

What I won't ignore are the likenesses and differences between Melville's troubled anti-hero, Amasa Delano, and the classic American Imago (perhaps the likes of Natty Bumppo or Davy Crockett). Thematically, this tension serves as flying buttress to the story's overall mythic structure.

Attempting to find a pattern in criticism generated by the story in the decades since Melville, Allan Moore Emery argues that its main purpose (and thus, Melville's) is to attack the ethics and direction of America of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries [48-68]. Approaching from that angle, I can hardly disagree with him. Amasa Delano, whom I hope this paper will suggest as a fallen or, better still, a failed mythic hero, might well represent America. His mind and soul, like his country's, are a tangle of optimism and haughty virginity within compromise. Delano's quest, in which he is technically unsuccessful, is to solve—from clues—the riddle of the San Dominick. And, as the hero needs a counterforce, so enters Babo.

To Charles Swann, Babo is simply fulfilling his devious role as "actor-manager" of a "dramatic production" [112]. And to this I cannot agree. Both brilliant and self-conscious he is, obviously: he knows he has near-absolute power over every life on board. And, knowing it, he manipulates everyone. Yet his is the dreadful prescience of "Star Wars" emperor. He is no play-actor but is the god of the Pit.

Barbara Baines would agree. She presents Babo as a demonic mastermind whose ultimate work of vengeance is to trick the whites into sharing a perverse "eucharist" in which they partake of the secretly prepared flesh of Aranda, one of Benito Cereno's officers, before his "crucifixion" and "resurrection" on the ship's "beak."

Lord Babo holds power over both body and soul [163-169]. After Aranda's skeleton had been riveted to the bow, according to the negroes, "the negro Babo was he who traced the inscription below it...the negro Babo was the plotter from first to last; he ordered every murder, and was the helm and keel of the revolt" [Melville 2518].

We need not reach far to envision him as Monster of the Pit and as Lord of Dread. Babo is no prank-playing Trickster but is the epitome of evil. He is more the Satan of the Bible or Tolkien's barely mentionable Lord of Darkness than he is.
the—fairly neutral—Greek Hades or Hel (or Hel) of Norse myth. He is no mere guardian of the dead but is Death, itself. And if so, then Benito Cereno is his oracle, unwilling or not. As Christ mediates between God and sinful humanity, so Cereno provides a link between Babo-of-the-Pit and Captain Delano, the embodiment of humanity’s (and possibly America’s?) guilt and innocence and the quest’s main force. The tale bears Cereno’s name because, though a pawn caught between hero and devil, he is a vital one; Lord Babo’s dark plan rests on him. In any case, though, on to the hero and his quest.

Though the “questing” hero normally volunteers for the job, and Delano, some might say, never does, I believe there is another way of looking at it that does no violence to the metaphor. The first branch of the Welsh mabinogi has Pwyll, king of Dyfed, becoming separated from a hunting party and winding up in woods he has never seen before. He has, in fact, ridden out of his world and into the world of Arawn, Lord of the Dead. For his own reasons, Arawn asks him to exchange identities with him for one year and Pwyll accepts [Ford 37-39]. And so does Amasa Delano. By the rules of his particular quest, he accepts again every time he chooses to ignore his natural suspicions. “Captain Delano is constantly seeking a rational explanation for the evil he fleetingly imagines,” says Miller, “and when he can find none, he dismisses the suspicion as ‘whimsey’” [155]. So Delano enters the blackness of Babo’s dominion not when he first steps onto the San Dominick’s deck but when, taking stock of the situation, he sees the Ashantee hatchet polishers and, willingly, denies his instinct.

The Ashantees, changing their axes together, mimic the role of Australian aborigines as they perform the manhood rite. In the semblance of spirits they come, naked but for goose down set in stripes of their own blood, swinging “bull-roarers” (spirit-voices), to escort the pubescent boy, via circumcision and the drinking of men’s blood, into manhood [Campbell 81]. Amasa Delano is that boy—or could be—with one exception: At that place Novalis called “the seat of the soul...where the inner and outer worlds meet,” we find him only mediocrity [Campbell 57]. The hatchet-polishers dare him to commit the virtuous act of recognizing evil and then matching its force to eat the forbidden fruit and to enter manhood. But the “scaless” have still to drop “from his eyes” [Melville 2508]. Until they do, he remains innocent of truth.

In The Mystery of Iniquity, William H. Shurr tackles the question of that act of virtue (of the “rare and superior” type), “an act that has all of the strength and brazen self-confidence which usually characterizes evil actions” [153]. This sort of virtue is as frightening to the average folk as is the direst evil. “The action leaves one on a lonely peak...Such pure goodness alienates one from his fellow man” [Shurr 153]. And in the end, his courage is the most common sort.

[O]rdinary people cannot recognize the good in its pure form, just as the ordinary person, Captain Amasa Delano, cannot recognize the extreme of pure evil when he encounters it in Benito Cereno [Shurr 153-154]. And to be “ordinary” is the core of Amasa Delano. It is the exact thing that ties him to mediocrity and denies his entry into the realm of enlightenment.

And so ignorance and an endless belief in the power of good work together both to confound his quest and, miraculously, to preserve him. Ignoring portents of evil, like Norwegian Jack of Sjoholm marching into the hut of the Gan-Finn (black sorcerer) whose storms have destroyed Jack’s ship and many others, he steps willingly into Babo’s realm, with nothing more than personal altruism as armor, specifically because he trusts in universal altruism [Booss].

That he clings to dependence on that same good for protection, again and again, while being hopelessly “out-brained” is evidence of his failure as hero. Melville says, “The singular alternations of courtesy and ill-breeding in the Spanish captain were unaccountable, except on one of two suppositions—innocent lunacy, or wicked imposture” [Melville 162]. Of course, Delano is wrong on both counts, hugely wrong, and this is the essence of why he survives at all: though a Spaniard, he is the American virgin, the newborn crazy one who walks free among the tribes because he is without the mark of any god. He is neither natural man nor heavenly angel but is suspended in a void between godly insight and animal instinct. For Delano, and some would say for America, ignorance is, indeed, bliss.

Yet, in spite of playing Babo’s (or Abaddon’s) game, Delano is not, in the last moment, corrupted. With the final shattering of the “pact,” even though Don Benito hands him the key to the riddle of San Dominick, his soul is torn from Death and, if sullied, at least it is freed from Don Benito’s fate. One might question, though, who’s end of the bargain is worse.
After School
by Tyler Bliss

It had been a long day for Lauren. School did not seem to go by as quickly as usual. She was happy finally to step off the bus. The kids had been picked up a little bit late so she had to hurry and get home before Margaret began to wonder where she was. Even thought it was not her fault that the bus was late she knew Margaret would think she dawdled. She quickly said good-bye to Sarah, who usually sat next to her on the bus and also got home before Margaret began to wonder where she was. Even thought it was not her fault that the bus picked up a little bit late so she had to hurry and get home, Margaret lived only two houses away. She entered.

Margaret was a skinny little girl, and unaware that it had been a long day for Lauren. School did not get her feet all the way. Lauren could hear her shuffling through the door. Lauren reached for her things on the porch chair and hoped she could dodge whatever confrontation Margaret was determined to give her. Lauren never understood why she had to come straight home after school. She was just told that Margaret had things to do other than worrying about where she was. Lauren's mother also had told her that a ten-year-old girl has no business wandering around the neighborhood after school is out. There was always plenty of time on Saturdays to play with friends. But Lauren couldn't remember the last time she had been allowed to have friends over, and Margaret had always been quick to remind all concerned that watching tow girls was not in her contract. Nor was Lauren allowed to go over to a friend's house. Worst of all, her parents were at home less and less. Lately, they had been going away on the weekends.

The door unlocked and Margaret opened the door slowly. She stood there looking down at Lauren, who was still standing just outside the door, as if she needed permission to enter. It was obvious Margaret was angry, but just how angry was not clear.

"Where have you been?" she asked sharply.

"The bus was late in picking us up and there..." Margaret cut her off with an abrupt finger pointed in Lauren's face. "I don't care what the reason. I expect you home at three-thirty and you know that. There's no reason for you to be late."

"It wasn't my fault the bus was late!" said Lauren, adamantly.

"I don't want to hear it!" Margaret turned away. "You know the rules."

Lauren took a step inside.

"But there was nothing I could do!"

"That's enough! Now get up to your room and do your homework!" Margaret commanded.

Lauren stood there a moment and stared at Margaret who had walked back over to the table and taken her seat again. She could not understand what it was that she had done to Margaret to make her this upset. Why couldn't she just come home and do what she wanted without having Margaret get mad at her for something? It angered Lauren that she could never get Margaret to listen. Every day there was something that upset Margaret and there was no way of knowing how to act.

"Why are you just standing there?" Margaret shouted. Tears began to build up in Lauren's eyes, and she dropped her backpack.

"You never listen to me!" she cried.

"Your mother's not paying me to listen; she's paying me to watch. Now go to your room!" demanded Margaret.

Lauren wiped her eyes with her hand and grabbed her backpack off of the floor and started walking toward the hall. She set her lunch box on the table as she walked by Margaret, who was now focused on the television.

As Lauren reached the door to the hall she slowed up and muttered, "I hate you."

Margaret jumped to her feet.

"What did you just say?"

Lauren continued to walk down the hall. Margaret ran up behind her and grabbed her by the arm, spinning her around.

"What did you just say to me?" Margaret shook her.

Lauren knew that Margaret would not spank her. That was one thing that she knew her mother had instructed Margaret not to do. If Margaret were to have any trouble she was to tell Lauren's mother about it when she got home, and she would handle it. And even then, Lauren couldn't recall a time when her mother had ever laid a hand on her. Lauren now felt that she had control of the situation.

"I said, 'I hate you,'" repeated Lauren, calmly and defiantly. She looked right at Margaret.

"You've got some nerve, little lady. You just wait until your mother gets home."

"Fine," Lauren said with a smile on her face. She shook her arm out of Margaret's hand and continued toward the stairs. She could feel Margaret staring at her as she walked down the hall. She knew she had won this little battle.

"I'm going to make sure your mother knows exactly what you said and, I can only imagine what she'll do to punish you." Margaret was yelling as Lauren reached the stairs.

"Go right ahead. I don't care."

Lauren yelled right back, and she really didn't care. She meant what she said and maybe for once her mother would ask her what she felt. No one ever asked her what she thought about Margaret. When her mother hired Margaret, she was at school and did not get to meet her until the following day when she got home from school. Lauren's mother simply told her that Margaret was fine for the job and that they should get along. And that was it. Nothing more was said and Lauren was left alone every day with Margaret.

Lauren reached the top of the stairs and glanced behind her to see if Margaret was still watching her. She was, and Lauren gave her the best bratty smile she could offer. Margaret groaned and threw her arms up in the air and stomped back into the kitchen.

"You can just stay up there until your mother gets home!" Margaret shouted. Lauren didn't bother responding because that's what she had in mind anyway. It made her laugh to think that all the power Margaret had left was yell at her from the kitchen.

Lauren proceeded down the long, dark hallway toward her room. She had chosen the room at the end of the hall when they first moved into this house five years ago. Even though there were five other bedrooms along the way, she liked the one at the end best—because of its closet. The closet was located directly underneath the attic stairs and the ceiling in the closet gradually slanted all the way down to the floor as it followed the steps above it. This gave her closet an extra ten feet or so and she
had turned this area into a small fortress, just for her—just for Lauren—and her dolls. Her parents were uneasy about her room being so far away from theirs because she was so young at the time, but Lauren persisted and they finally decided it was all right.

She opened the door to her room and tossed her backpack onto her bed. She shut the door quietly and hoped that Margaret would not hear her. In the past when she had been sent to her room, she had slammed her door shut just to make Margaret angry, but not this time. By not slamming the door she would make Margaret wonder if she had actually gone to her room and she would have to come and check. Lauren also didn't want Margaret to think she was mad. She was in control and did not want to do anything that might give Margaret a chance to get the upper hand. Instead, Lauren slipped into her room and began to think about what she was going to say to her mother when she came home.

Lauren climbed onto her bed and pulled some paper out of her bag. She figured that this would finally be her big chance to tell her mother everything she'd been feeling. Margaret was acting so upset that Lauren knew her mother would come upstairs and ask why. And she also knew her mother would tell her to apologize to Margaret the next day. Lauren decided to write down everything she wanted to say to her mother to make sure she didn't forget a thing. The first thing she would be asked is why she would say that she hated Margaret. Lauren wrote that she had never spoken to her mother like this and she wanted her parents more.

She looked up at the clock and extended, puffed out some air that made her bangs briefly flutter. Things would be better now.

First, there was the situation with Margaret. Lauren wrote that she did not understand why she had to come straight home every afternoon and why she could not spend more time with her friends. She had always received good grades. Spending more time with her friends would not take away from her studying. And if Margaret knew where she was after school, there would be no reason for her to worry. Lauren also wrote that she did not think Margaret understood her nor was willing to try. She never let her finish saying what she wanted to say, she spent most of the time watching T.V., and rarely did she spend any time with her. Lauren was sad that she was left alone with this lady who didn't care about her—Lauren also wanted her mother to know that she wished to spend more time with her and her father. She wrote that the only time she got to see them was in the evening when they got home from work, and shortly after that she would get sent to bed. The weekends were another thing. It made her sad to see her parents leave every other weekend for their little trips (or "get-aways" as her father had put it), not because they left her with Margaret, but because she wanted to go with them. Finally Lauren wrote that she never felt that she had been given a chance to get to know her parents. For as long as she could remember, she had spent the time after school with a babysitter, and before that it was day care. No one had ever asked her how she felt, and she wanted to say that she felt left out, and that she wanted to be with her parents more.

Lauren stopped to read over what she had written. She smiled as she looked at it. This is what she had always wanted to say.

The thud of a car door closing outside caught Lauren by surprise. She looked up at the clock and saw that it was time for her mother to get home. It was just a matter of time until she sent Margaret home and came upstairs to talk with her. Lauren went over to the door and opened it a bit to see if she could hear what was being said downstairs. She heard the two taking but could not make out what was being said. A few minutes later she heard the door shut and the car drive off. She ran over to her bed and waited. She began to quiver as she heard the footsteps coming up the stairs. She had never spoken to her mother like this and she was nervous about trying it, but she was happy that she now had the chance. The footsteps came down the hall and stopped at her door. There was a pause before the door opened, and Lauren acted like she was reading her book and did not hear her coming.

She looked up as the door swung open and watched in shock as Margaret walked into the room.

"Your mother said you can stay up here the whole night and to forget about dinner." Margaret was smiling and her eyes sparkled in a devilish way.

"I thought she was home. Where did she go?" Lauren asked timidly.

"She's going to meet your father for dinner and then they're going out to see a movie. I'm going to bed as soon as your homework is done, and she wanted me to tell you to watch your mouth too." With that, Margaret turned abruptly and left.

Lauren sat there in silence. She looked at her written list, and it became apparent that she'd never really deliver it. A new expression came upon her face.

"Maybe," she thought, "the problem is me." She slowly and neatly began to tear up the list. "Maybe I shouldn't care about my parents so much." She looked up as if relieved and, with her lower lip extended, puffed out some air that made her bangs briefly flutter. Things would be better now.
Contributors

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