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Eng 112-11 (English Comp II)

10 December 2018

Narrative Project—Draft 3

Under the Cover of Night

It was a wet and dreary Saturday night. My friend Ayesha and I walked around shopping at the Franklin Mills Mall which we'd been doing the entire afternoon and well into the evening hours. My feet felt very sore and tired from all the walking. I waited around in Burlington as Ayesha finishes making a purchase, which takes longer than either of them expected. I, growing impatient, decided against waiting any longer and decided to step outside in the night air, and I'm glad I had.

As I stepped outside, pushing open the door, I was greeted by a chilly breeze that swept through my entire body. Standing just a few yards from the door, I took in the comfortably-cold breeze. I closed my eyes and smiled half a grin to myself. I opened my eyes, and looks across the parking lot for Ayesha's car, which wasn't immediately visible in the distance.

Interestingly, the sky was pitch dark, but the streetlights all across the parking lot were brightly lit, much like the lights inside and outside the mall itself, giving the night air a brownish-orange hue. There were water puddles — some small, others large — all over the pedestrian sidewalk as well as the parking lot, because it had rained earlier this afternoon. There

were also small dots of water glistening all over the vehicles and other objects. Why was this so fascinating? I love the rain, particularly nighttime rain.

A few moments later, Ayesha exited the mall, coming out the same door I did, carrying a few large shopping bags in her hands, stuffed with merchandise. We then both began the walk toward her red Kia Rio. For me, the less-than-three-minute walk felt more like a thirty. The more steps I took, the more the pain in my feet radiated.

As Ayesha unlocked and opened her car doors, I immediately pulled open the front passenger side door and took my seat. I also took a sigh of relief as I already finally felt the discomfort in my feet finally beginning to subside. As Ayesha immediately went right to work loading her merchandise in the trunk of her car, I felt obligated to render — or at least offer — assistance, since Ayesha was a friend of mine after all.

"Need any help over there?" I offered, secretly hoping Ayesha would decline so that I would not need to stand and walk for any longer than I had to.

"Nah, I'm good," said Ayesha.

As hard as I tried not to let it show, I'm glad Ayesha declined. I sighed in relief and looks straight ahead. Less standing and walking on my part! I wondered to myself if it was wrong to feel so happy that Ayesha declined my help. But then again, how wrong was I to offer my assistance to Ayesha, hoping she'd turn me down? What if Ayesha had said yes after all? Then what? I thought that that would've been a hole I myself would've dug myself in. My mind lingered on these theories but they did next to nothing to distract me from the pain and discomfort that resisted in my feet still. I continued pondering these thoughts for the good minute or two it took Ayesha to shut the trunk of her car, then walk up to me, telling me she needs to take care of one more thing back at the Burlington Customer Service Center.

"You gonna be okay in here?" asked Ayesha.

"Yeah!" I confidently replied. "Oh yeah!"

"Okay, then, I'll be right back."

Ayesha then shut her car door and I watched her as she walked back into the mall. Once she disappeared into it, this was when I now felt completely alone... in a frightening sense. I was alone in the car but there were mall patrons and shoppers all around, walking through the parking lot, going in and out my vehicles as well as in and out the mall, carrying shopping bags. I could hear faint sounds of small conversations taking place but it did next to nothing to ease the fear that had been racing through me like a wild virus.

It was silence. Eerie silence. It was dark in here. Eerie darkness. So silent you could hear a spider slowly climbing its tiny legs up a wall. But it was quiet and dark. I had become tired from so much walking that I didn't have much a problem going right to sleep and I had drifted off to sleep soon thereafter. But it was only a short, temporary sleep. About fifteen to twenty minutes later, I opened my eyes. I was not back in the car though. I woke up in a strange cold room. The room was moving and has windows. The continuous sounds of running rails and frequent clacking that filled my ears let me know I was on board a train. I looked out the window, gazing at the wintry, snowing, night landscape. I gathered my bearings and didn't have much of a problem getting oriented to my surroundings.

"Where am I? Where is this train going?" I wondered to myself.

I had exited the room and walked into the very-thin hallway. That's when another room caught my attention. It was a more luxurious room than the one I was just in. I had gone in it and saw that it was a bigger room, a darker room. There were more windows that were much larger. This room was full of beautiful, glowing ambient lights of purple and pink. As soon as I'd gone

completely into the room, the door automatically slid shut, as if this room were that of a science fiction spaceship. The door had a window, shaped like a circle. A sudden thud caught me off guard. Startled, I pivoted around fast to see a cat behind me. She definitely wasn't there a moment ago. She was much larger than the average house cat and had glowing gold eyes with intimidating fangs that she revealed when she opened her mouth widely. She slowly approached me, stretching out her front legs, extending her claws as if she were about to attack me. I attempted to quickly move away, but she moved to me just as quickly. No use in running away. But I darted toward the door. To my horror, the door wouldn't budge – it was locked. What kind of room was this?

"Don't bother," said a female-sounding voice, eerie and threatening. The voice came from below my waist.

"No way," I said out loud to myself. "Did this cat just talk?"

"I did just speak..." said the woman's voice, "to you."

"What are you!?"

Without giving me a response this time the cat mutated into a human adult female with olive-colored skin, but her eyes still had that creepy gold glow and vertical black football-shaped pupils. She was naked, about 6'3, looking down at me with an intimidating look on her face and a menacing grin. She also had long, weapon-like cat claws. Scared, I backed into the wall and she inches closer toward me.

"I am the one who will send you to your grave," she hissed, leaning her head by me.

"You will die tonight!"

With that, she raised one hand high above her head, her dangerously-sharp claws fully extended and she viciously slashed me across the face with all five claws!

Total blackness.

I did not felt a thing. No pain. Nothing.

Complete nothingness.

I was in limbo.

Dark limbo.

I could not move... at all... but I did wake up as my eyes slowly opened and I finally found myself back inside Ayesha's car, alone in it, still waiting for Ayesha to return from the mall. For some reason, it was like I had on restraints as I couldn't move any of my limbs, except for maybe an inch or so but that was all. A white noise filled my ears. I couldn't even turn my head to either side to see what it was. To my horror there was blood all over the windshield. Had someone been murdered and the body was on the roof? A hand suddenly slaps on the windshield! This scared me further! I tried like hell to move something, anything. I could not. I tried to open my mouth to scream my lungs out, but no sound could come out! Just silent air. Suddenly a dark mist made my way through the inside of the car. I realized it was a ghost as I could even make out a face. Suddenly, the door opened, and someone was getting in. After a last-ditch effort, I was finally free from the invisible constraints! The blood on the windshield, the hand that slapped it, and the ghost were all gone. I was relieved to realize it was all a dream and a terrifying sleep-paralysis vision. I breathed heavily.

"Amir, are you okay?" asked Ayesha, coming in the car and closing its door.

"Yes, I'm okay now!" I said while breathing heavily.

"Did you have a bad dream?"

"You could say that."

"Tell me about it," Ayesha said, starting the ignition.

"I just dreamt I was on the train and this evil cat-woman thing tried to kill me," I began to explain, peaking Ayesha's interest.