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CBC Writing Competition

Junior Entry

Category: Fiction

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A Story of Greed

The air that brushed against my face suggested an early spring. Despite the dismal

scenery of death and decay, the air was fresh. I stopped for a moment savoring the silence. As I

opened my eyes and continued on my trek, my mind, as it tended to do during the long walks

that filled my life, wandered.

"In fact," I stated, at first surprised by how loud my voice seemed, "It was exactly seven

years ago to this day." I remembered the desperation that filled my heart and mind. I was eleven

at the time; the word "parents" meant nothing to me. I had been living on the streets as long as I

could remember. With time, I had learned the cruelty of people. Their lack of trust, their lack of

compassion. Soon, I became the person responsible for that lack of trust, taking anything

whenever I could. But seven years ago was different.

I remember brandishing the knife like an inexperienced fool; the man was dressed no

better than I was, a loaf of bread in his arms. As he noticed the knife, he seemed to grow sturdier,

slightly taller. I the demand and he gave the answer.

"I have worked hard for this bread, put labor into my pay which became this bread here.

By all laws, under this beautiful sky and upon this plentiful earth, it is mine and my family's. In

other words, child, I won't give it to you."

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He then turned and continued his way down the alley. I had felt disheartened at my failed attempt. The feeling of stupidity and embarrassment filled my soul with frustration which then turned to rage. As I prepared to turn away, something sparked and swelled within me. Without thinking, I turned back and sprinted towards the man, knife held at the waist. I tackled him, the weight of my body forcing the knife into his kidney.

The man groaned, then fell to the cobbled path of the alley with a thud. I did something I never thought I would: as naturally as an insult I smiled and stabbed him once more, this time between a rib. As I reached for the bread, I had somehow crossed a line. Pain like no other soared through my body, my veins and blood turning into molten metal. I clasped my stomach with both hands, looking up and down the alley. Only the corpse and I were within the narrow confines. Coming from within, I felt if not heard a cackle of the utmost loathing. I would never forget the sound. A laugh filled with so much lust for possessions, for wealth and power. This feeling blossomed through my body, and I felt myself go rigid.

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I sighed in the manner I had done throughout my life, regretting so much the choices I made. The things I had done. Looking towards the sky I felt lost. Shaking myself I continued on my way, picking up my thoughts where I had left off.

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I was about to tip forward. I blinked, confused at the sudden change in surroundings. A pain flared in my right shoulder. Looking towards it, I saw the flight of an arrow protruding.

Looking towards my left hand, I noticed my body was covered in scratches and bruises, every inch of flesh unrecognizable. Blood was trickling down my swollen head; and my right hand clasped around the crimson knife was shaking uncontrollably. Smoke filled my nostrils. The village I had lived in was burning, and everyone was dead. All of this entered my mind at once. I fell to my knees, gasping in pain, as my senses were filled with inescapable torture.

I choked back a sob, biting my tongue, attempting to gain control. Without warning, my body began to shake and writhe, my flesh bubbled like soup upon a stove. This unearthly sensation sent me onto my back kicking and screaming, my body clenching. Minutes passed as this experience continued. Steam rose from my body, I dug my heels into the dirt. Then, with a clatter, the arrow fell from my shoulder onto the ground, and the writhing of my flesh stopped. I found myself staring inches away from the corpse of a man, his neck slit open, his eyes blank, and mouth agape. A fly crawled from his tongue, flew the few inches and landed upon my head. I remember laying in my own blood and vomit, wondering how I could have done something so horrible. Then the voice spoke to me. It said few words in the same tone, dripping with the malice and greed of thousands.

"Because you wanted to." No child nor woman had been spared the destruction I caused. After I left, I traveled from place to place, and began the life of a wanderer. I no longer stole, but worked anywhere as often as I could. I soon thought myself cured of whatever compelled the massacre at my home town. I entered a village in my fourteenth year, wearing a wide-brimmed straw hat, and the thick wool cloak of a drifter. During my travels, I had become silent.

Towns were scarce in that part of Iza; my supplies were running very low, and I needed money to purchase food. I was beyond too proud to beg, and was becoming desperate as jobs within this town were just as scarce as those who would offer lodging to a nameless, and equally

parentless youth. Quickly giving up my search, I remembered making my way towards a well near the center of town. Coming to the well, I found a pair of soldiers dressed in mail, looking down upon a woman. It was obvious they had taken one too many drinks at the village tavern. I made my way towards the group. One, perhaps the more intoxicated of the two, leaned closer to the female. By this point I was within hearing range.

"You should come have a drink with us." He leaned closer, smiling drunkenly.

His friend released a loud, hoarse laugh at a joke only he seemed to understand.

"Don't worry; we'll protect you from anyone, like..." He turned from the girl, drawing his sword and pointing the tip in my direction. "...him." I stepped back, reaching for the blade which held my sins. Flinching at the memory, I decided against it. The soldier, pointing the sword in my direction, released another howling laugh.

"Thought better of it, didn't ya boy?" He sheathed the sword and turned, grabbing the female's arm. Anger flared within me. Immediately, I was from my place by the well facing the soldier, my hand gently resting on his armored forearm. Taken aback at my own speed, I gathered myself. My voice directed towards the woman.

"Do you want to go with these men?" She shook an infuriated head. Judging from the anger emanating from this woman, I questioned for a moment, which I was really saving...the girl or the guards? I turned to the soldier.

"Sorry, but it seems she doesn't want to go with you." The intoxicated soldier chose not to waste time with words and lashed out with his fist. I stepped to the right barely in time to dodge the attack. A second came heading towards me. I blocked, jamming the outside of my forearm into the inside of his, stepping forward and past him. I then brought the tip of my shoe with all the force I could muster into the laces of his boot. He was leaning forward, off balance

by the force of his punch, the ale he had drunk because of this he took time recovering. Once his foot was knocked out from underneath him, he dropped swiftly.

The other soldier had stood by; now that my foot was in the air he leapt forward, hooking the crook of his elbow underneath my knee of my one leg still on the ground and the large palm of his gloved hand onto my head. He pivoted my body backwards and smashed my skull into the stone. Stars exploded, pain flared. An audible crunch.

A wave of raw power passed through my limbs. I shook myself off mentally as a controlled anger began to flare in my breast. I swung my legs backwards, pivoting myself; twisting my legs around, I spun upon my head and released it from his grasp. Planting my hand on the ground, I stopped, staring into the surprised face of the guard as I crouched downwards. Gathering the strength in my legs and arms, I leapt forward. Grasping his shoulder, I forced him onto the stone. The moment I felt his head make contact, I threw my fist into his stomach. Though my bare hand sunk into metal rings of mail, I felt his body convulse as he expelled the alcohol he had drunken. Looking towards my fist, I realized that rings were embedded in the flesh. I stood up, stepped over covering my hand. Picked up my straw hat.

The woman, perhaps as filled with pride as I was, managed a thank you. Dusting off my hat, I ranted.

"I hate watching people try to take advantage of others. It's annoying. He threatened first, I was just defending myself. The fact that you didn't have to beat the alcohol out of them is just a bonus." I smiled towards her. "Thank you for making my evening interesting." I said pleasantly. She smiled, the anger had dissipated. Though the mood was joyful, I soon found myself still sweating and out of breath. My heart couldn't seem to stop beating, and I found

myself incapable of standing as my flesh began to twitch. The pain throughout my body vanished before my knees hit the ground. I brushed off, choosing to ignore the obvious.

The woman bent down to face me, revealing a bright brown hair, almost blonde, tied back in a ponytail. Her clothing, her skin tone and hair, suggested she worked in the fields.

"I owe you a dinner. I'm Erin." She said.

I nodded, gaining control of my breath. My mind rushed for a name.

"I'm Kirnton; nice to meet you." I stood and placed the ruined straw hat upon my head. Kirnton, what a stupid name.

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I chuckled at the memory as I stopped to feel the soil between my fingers, the dust dragging across the hardened calluses. Looking towards the moon, I felt far older than I was. I caught myself sighing. I regretted so greatly my visit to that town. Bringing myself out of the remorse I continued into the desert.

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Not long after the incident, I decided I had to leave the town. Not many people were welcoming to those who had defeated soldiers meant to protect them. I should have left the first night, but I was foolish.

Erin's home was glorious; I helped her start up the fire, then she sat me down in a rocking chair, refusing the help I offered as she prepared dinner. I'd been on the road so long, I actually began to consider the food I had scavenged together to be a meal. Perhaps half an hour past, I sat as all sorts of scents wafted from the kitchen. My mouth began to water; I began to

question whether or not my pride mattered much, when finally Erin called me from the kitchen. Trying my best to *walk* to the table, I pulled up a chair and sat down. As she walked from the stove to the table, placing the pot and bowls accordingly, I began to grow curious. Where was her family?

Not wanting to be rude, I decided it was better not to ask any questions. The beautiful aroma of a thick soup called forth from the pot; she finally placed a loaf of bread upon the table and sat. She looked at my eager expression, and laughed.

"Alright, you're free to go." Trying not to seem eager, I reached forward and began ladling soup into my bowl. Erin tore off a chunk of bread and handed it to me. I shoveled soup into my mouth. Wiping my lips upon my sleeve, I proceeded to go after the bread. I grasped it and was about to chomp down with all my strength, when I heard the wheezing laugh of an old, decrepit man. I cocked my head, searching for the source of the sound. Erin looked up from her dinner. "What's wrong?" I decided that it was pointless to ask her if she heard anything. "Nothing."

A skeptical look appeared on her face, but a pounding drew her to the door. I stared at the bread, the incident rising in my memory. Erin began shouting as the laughter filled my head once more. I ran to find the same guards from earlier that day, tying her hands behind her back, one groaning as she struck. The anger flared; the old man's' laughter grew louder, younger, filled with malice. I stepped forward. Suddenly, pressure flared within my body, building to the point I thought I would explode. I managed to shout before I was lost to myself.

Forcing myself I attempted a warning, though it was too late I was swallowed into darkness. The laughter enveloped me, becoming my world...my life. I wanted to stay like that, to float in the darkness away from all light, away from the horrible world. Time passed within this

void, how much was immeasurable. Suddenly, I regained consciousness. I leaned forward, about to fall. My knees thudded into the dirt. I stared at the carnage around me, same as before through blurred eyes. I raised my hands to cover my face, to discover I only bore one arm. It was just the same as before; hell on earth. Throwing the knife in fury, I walked the town tears in my eyes. Picking my way through the carnage I found my way to Erin's hoe and buried her in the fields she worked in.

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Sighing, I leaned back against a stone within the endless desert that now enveloped me. I shuddered at the memory, as my body had healed by the evil force imbedded deep within my soul, even my arm returning to me. The memory was so fresh; it had happened exactly four years ago, but it seemed like not a single hour passed from that moment. The pressure was building again, for what I knew would be the last time; with a mental assurance, I thought to myself I would let it all out, unleash it upon the desert. I chuckled to myself. The familiar pain grew in my abdomen. I waited for it to break loose. I wanted to die, to move past this world. I urged the evil, feeding it, but it would not come. Before I could question this, the earth in front of me rose like baking bread. From it, a tree grew, reaching towards the heavens with a quickening pace. This tree grew to towering heights, far above me, sprouting higher and faster. Minutes passed. Finally, it seemed to slow. My attention was drawn to one of the lower branches; a man sat chewing an apple.

"Forgive me, but I am very busy so I have to get to the point." The man stared intently at me.

"Well? What point?" I felt strangely indifferent, despite the entrance the man had made. His eyes suddenly flashed yellow, and memories began to flow into my mind. They showed me ducking and dodging and twisting at seemingly impossible angles to dodge the thrust and slashes of swords. Arrows flew from the crowd of people surrounding me, one thudded into my shoulder. I smiled at them, an evil gleam within my black eye. Bringing my two palms together, a black pulse issued from my body, kicking up dust, sending the people flying backwards and the arrows back into the ones who had released them. As they tried to recover, I murdered many with the same, sick speed. I shuddered as the images continued; I sat there for perhaps hours, as I was shown my wrongs done in this world by that man. The flow of memories stopped.

"Now that you have witnessed your wrongs, I must ask you a question." I stared perplexed.

"Do you think you deserve forgiveness?" I had the answer instantly.

"Why ask a question that I think about every day of my life?"

"I think I want to be forgiven." I looked towards the sky. "I know that I don't deserve to be." The man stood. Grasping his right wrist with his left hand, he directed his hands towards my forehead. It glowed a light yellow.

"I know you're a good person now, but I don't think you'll be able to do much good with that inside of you." Rage exploded within my body, and a focused wave of darkness burst from my forehead, shoving my back into the rock. I closed my eyes against the excruciatingly alien sensation. I waited a few seconds as the roaring slowly faded. The dark presence within me grew weaker. A weight was lifted from me. I felt whole. Opening my eyes, I stared towards the man. Hovering above his hand was a small ball that held resemblance to iron, or perhaps lead. He clenched his hand inwards, and with a gust of wind the ball compacted into nothing.

"Before I go, I have a message for you. Your parents apologize for not being there for you; trust me when I say they mean it. Try and lead a fulfilling life, and you guessed correctly: it's Kirnton." He lifted his right arm in goodbye, left inside his pocket. A bolt of lightning flew into him. With a flash, he was gone.

I stood. I felt light headed. I smiled to myself, the feeling of thankfulness filling inside me as the sun rose.