

Sean McLeod

Dr. Amare

English Comp 101

6 February 2018

Changed

I remember it like it was yesterday. I awoke to the great grin upon my mother's face and the few words she had spoken. I'd probably taken these three words for granted my entire life, "Good morning, Sunshine!" I responded with the typical, mumbled "good morning" and smiled back at her before I began my morning routine of getting dressed, having a cup of coffee with breakfast, and brushing my teeth. Afterward, I started to feel exhilarated, overcome by a feeling of jubilation as we were finally leaving for Ship Island: a vacation we had been planning for over a week. We were traveling there with Aunt Stephanie and her three children—Savannah, Sierra, and Kamren, my three favorite cousins.

Looking back now, I had thought little of the night before when my mother asked if I was sure I wanted to go; she had seemed troubled. However, today I thought, "She seems almost as excited as I am." We left round ten in the morning and had agreed to meet the rest of the crew at the docks. To this day, I still remember watching the ocean and its gorgeous waves calling to me. I was fixed upon a team of dolphins swimming about 10 or 20 meters out from our ship. Each dolphin was riding the water gracefully and effortlessly.

Around noon, our ship arrived at the island, and it was different from how I imagined it but fascinating nonetheless. Once we had docked, we hastily proceeded toward the southern

shore side. We helped my mom get situated, setting up the chairs and stowing the baggage as well as our lunches. Then, Kamren, Savannah, Sierra, and I ran to the water and dived in. There were all sorts of good fun such as water fights, laughing, and name-calling. We decided to adventure further out around 50 to 100 meters or so. The water was deep, the waves were high, and the salt concentration of the water burned every crevice of our throats. It was difficult for us to swim back to shore with the current pulling us back out to sea; however, we managed. I went to my mother; I was thirsty, and the salt burning in my throat along with the summer heat searing my skin felt quite unpleasant. She handed me a root beer, and I chugged— only to find that the soda amplified the burning sensation within my throat. I thought my thirst unquenchable until Aunt Stephanie handed me a bottle of water. I was satiated by its soothing coolness, refreshed and ready to dive back in.

We proceeded back to the water, this time venturing only half the distance we previously had journeyed. We swam around for around an hour I imagine. Alone, I came back to the shore where my mom had been seated. I searched and searched for over an hour like a lost puppy wandering in the streets. I guess the waves were too alluring, their gorgeous glimmer calling to her like the Piper of Hamelin to the 130. Another hour or so had passed, and our entire crew was still searching.

Eventually, I came across a boy, younger than I was at the time, and he said someone had drowned; it was a lady. I remember seeing a crowd gathered on the shore, and a helicopter flew in. My aunt found out the lady was my mother, and after that news, we proceeded back to the docks with our belongings and waited for the boat to arrive. I was told my mother was unconscious and was going to be resuscitated at the hospital and that my father would take me to see her.

The ship's crew offered me anything I wanted on the boat ride, free of charge. I didn't want anything but still asked for some Reese's Pieces. I never touched them, and to this day, the very scent of them makes me sick to my stomach. My aunt then handed me the most beautiful conch shell I had ever seen. It had a vibrant red color that faded like the layers of a flame. I wish I still had it, but it was lost, forgotten on the ship.

When we reached the docks, my father was waiting for me. He had been unable attend the Ship's Island trip because he had to work. He took me home and told me to wait in his room. I sat in the room, gazing at the mirror, unaware of the situation. When he returned, the first thing I asked was, "When are we going to the hospital to visit Momma?" He looked as though his lungs were about to collapse and struggled to hold back the tears in his eyes, and then I knew and said the words for him.

I don't know what it feels like to have your heart carved out of your chest, but I imagine that moment was a very similar experience, and tears poured and poured until I fell asleep. I woke up, and my dad's arms were around me. Ever since then, my dad has always been there for me. He has taken up all the duties: the cooking, the cleaning, and the family time. Looking back, I realize I'm lucky to have such an amazing father.

There are many things I had taken for granted, little things like saying "Good Morning," seeing smiles, and hearing "I love you." I guess after the tragedy, a lot of insight was gained, yet to this day, I remain the same.