

# Senselessly Lost

HIGHER SCHOOL CERTIFICATE EXAMINATION  
ENGLISH EXTENSION COURSE 2 MAJOR WORK  
IDENTIFICATION TAG

Student No.: 11305679 C358

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Category and Description: SS MAJOR WORK

ATTACH THIS CARD SECURELY TO EACH PART  
OF THE PROJECT. DO NOT PIN.

Peering out from behind an ancient desk, an old woman whose skin was as parched and cracked as the table itself beckoned the young man forward. Time had withered her appearance, yet clearly by the sight of her dark animated eyes her spirit was still radiant. The woman sat upon an elegant chair, fashioned no doubt from the same wood as the desk, and aged in a similar manner. She was clad in an outfit popularised in the twenties, but considered embarrassingly outdated in the following decades. Bookshelves equally as old as the desk loomed ominously over the young man, dissolving his presence amongst the multitude of towering leather spines. Charles Dickens and Jane Austin observed from up high as the young man stepped forward. Although he stood erect to a height of six foot three, the height of the four-foot tall woman equaled his own, due to the elevation provided by the red leather upholstered chair.

His features were boldly chiseled onto his face, and one could notice a definite attractive quality to his semblance. Although his complexion was fairly tan, the lighting in the lamp-lit study caused him to glow with a ghostly ether. However, an observer of his visage would fail to note any of these qualities, before being first drawn to the sight of his eyes and the entrancing gaze they cast. The grey irises that gave way to more brilliant colours upon closer inspection would captivate viewers, paralysed as they were enthralled by their mystical quality.

He clearly felt uncomfortable in these unfamiliar surroundings. Shifting his weight from one foot to the other, he stood his ground only because of the warmth emanating from the old woman's smile. Finally, with a quick wave of her hand, the woman motioned for him to be seated. The chair was made from a fine leather; old, yet immensely soft. He sat rigidly; despite its exceptional craftsmanship and softness, he simply could not attain any degree of comfort whilst sitting in the chair.

A mere three days ago, the young man was in this very same room pawing through the valuables that attracted his eye. He was a thief, but hardly a hardened criminal. His life wasn't meant to follow this path, but unfortunately his options had become very limited five years prior.

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Five summers earlier he was perhaps the happiest of twenty-year-olds that one could imagine. William lived with his parents and attended college that was within a five minute drive from his home. At Hampton University in Virginia he had completed his first year, passing every subject with a combination of merits and distinctions without any difficulties. Everything was flawless for him; his friends constantly flocked around him, reveling in his presence, simply because he radiated amusement, and college work was so exceedingly easy that he had more than enough time to spend with his friends.

Everything was perfect until one night. His parents had bade him farewell, and left for a romantic evening alone together, at an eccentric five star restaurant whilst he was left at home with take away food. He wasn't normally saddened by solitude; in fact he often reveled in the relief it provided from the perpetual events that engaged his life. But this evening it was different. He felt particularly alone with no one to talk to. It was as if his solitude was an invitation to his impending death, which waited within the reach of his breath at the turn of the corner. His fear staved off sleep that tried to weigh down his eyelids. His fear was completely irrational. Nothing had given him reason to be afraid or even anxious for that matter; nevertheless all he could do that evening was sit before the television, petrified by every sound caused by the settling of the house. The phone beside him rang, sending his heartbeat to a higher level of pace than it had ever experienced before. Clumsily he grabbed the phone, and as he lifted it to his ear his life ended.

His current life was destroyed as he listened to the man introduce himself through the mono speaker of the phone. It was a police officer, "Officer Benson", who explained that his parents had been involved in a car accident on the way home from the restaurant. The sound of twisting steel had illuminated the car as a particularly drunken truck driver had plowed through the driver's cabin of the ford sedan. He lowered the phone, weakly unable to hold it, and then drawing upon his strength, raised it to his ear once more.

At the request of the officer, he made his way to the local hospital in the Cherokee Jeep that served as the family's second car. He didn't even bother to park the car properly, merely drew it alongside the footpath in a no standing zone, and leapt from the drivers seat, sprinting towards the hospital. If it were not for the nurse already entering the county hospital, he would have crashed through the automatic glass doors in his haste. Exhausted from his sprint, he clawed at the reception desk, gasping for breath, and heaving his name. Urgently, he was directed down the hall, and into the fifth door on the right. Inside he met the officer that had demanded his presence at the hospital.

Benson turned "I'm sorry, but I have some awful news for you," he began "Your father is dead, and your mother is in the next room undergoing critical surgery to try and save her life". Emotion took hold of his world and his senses went numb. He began to breathe deep, sucking in vast portions of air, again and again. His mind was raging an all-out war with his body, trying to escape from the horrors that it had just been exposed to. Finally he collapsed upon the tiled floor. His breathing resumed a regular pace, but his consciousness did not.

Hours passed. At One A.M. he opened his eyes to be confronted by two anxious nurses who had been desperately trying to revive him. Behind the nurses, Officer Benson's face materialized. "Come, your mother is waiting," he said softly.

A faint glimmer of hope flickered in him as he stepped through the door of the room that he had been moved to, and into the hallway that seemed to extend to oblivion in either direction. He followed the officer past ten doors to finally settle outside the eleventh on the left. He stooped to peer through the small glass window that cut into the door five and a half feet up the wood. Inside, hospital equipment and machinery littered the room, but his focus fell upon the bed at the centre of the room. There he saw not his mother, but a silhouette beneath a draped sheet.

Desperately searching blindly for the handle to the door, the officer gripped his wrist and held firmly, "The doctor that has attended to you will not let you enter. The hospital was unsure of how you would respond to the news, and now, out of concern for you lapsing into another bout of hyperventilation it is under strict orders that you do not enter the room to where your mother lies. I'm sorry but whilst you lost consciousness she too passed on." The officer continued to speak, but William could no longer hear.

The earth never hears the voices of anguish amongst the living. And so the funeral passed but the grief remained.

Will lived at home for a short while after the disaster, but within weeks the state took control of his life. Normally, the government would only interfere with minors' lives; however, different circumstances altered their course of action in this case. Employed under the government, the truck driver who had destroyed

his life had finished his circuit of the city, and before returning the garbage truck had set about attempting an alphabetical pub-crawl. He was well into the P's before deciding that any more drinking might slightly affect his driving ability, and had promptly set off to return the truck to the depot before returning home. By the laws of probability, he was destined to have an accident, but the odds were simply not on William's side. The officials of the state, deemed Will to be too badly shaken by his loss to be able to return his life to its regular affairs. Like all cases where the government is responsible for loss, a large settlement sum was paid to a trust fund in his name in order to avoid any confronting lawsuit. With consideration of his education, it was decided that William would only have access to the one million dollars after he completed college under state-appointed supervision.

William's home, where he had grown up his entire life was sold, with the monetary sum added to that already in the trust fund, and he was sent to board at the college. Along with the house, the family cars and many of his parents' possessions were sold. With the sale of these belongings, he lost both the items themselves, and the more important memories that were intrinsically bound to them.

With the return to college a month after his tragedy, his assessment work was far from the same. Within a month, his grade average plummeted. The friends whom he held dear had been driven from him by the pessimistic manner

that polluted his previously optimistic attitude. They realised that if he continued to allow his misfortune to destroy his own life it would inevitably spread to destroy theirs. With each friend that he lost, and each exam that he failed, he buried himself further and further under an ever-thickening layer of misery.

One day he just left. On this particular Friday he got dressed, left his room at the boarding house of the college, left the money that was waiting for him on completion of his education, left all his belongings without bothering to pack, and left his former life. He had become so anesthetised by the tragedies that had befallen him, that possessions meant nothing to him anymore. He didn't take any money with him; William didn't care what was to happen to himself in the world outside the tormented sanctuary of the college. Whether he was to live or die, he felt was not within his control, and so did nothing to prepare himself for what the future held for him.

That day he wandered about the streets like a stray lamb. He had no sense of where he was, or where he was going. Will had walked far from the familiar place that he called home; following the sun in the morning, and leaving it in his wake in the afternoon. Time passed quickly, and he drew the clammy night air into his mouth through chapped lips as his guide sank below the horizon. Hunger taunted his body, but his mind hardly listened. He was a stranger in an unknown city, with no idea of where to go, and no money, yet strangely he wasn't



worried. His fate didn't rest in his hands any more, he was no longer responsible for his troubles.

Fatigue began to take its toll on William. The effort that he required to move his legs doubled and redoubled. Staggering, he found his way to a dark alley, and collapsed upon a spread out pile of newspapers. It was winter, though not snowing yet. The cold was bitter, but bearable for William beneath his five layers of clothing. Reluctantly he closed his eyes and the darkness seeped into his mind.

In surviving five years from that day, William learned that the only way for him endure the plagues of mortality was to resort to thievery. He had tried appealing to the good will of people, but those that helped him often had little to give. He had found that the generous are never rich, and thus decided to take from those who could afford to spare. He would steal to eat, and steal to buy board, never anything more than the necessities. It wasn't his morality that stopped him from taking more than absolutely necessary, but the fact that he had no purpose for possessions in his life. William had made his way to Washington D.C. amongst the far more hardened criminals that beleaguered the streets. Here he neither existed nor lived but somehow survived.

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The old woman spoke. As she did, the wrinkles beneath her chin wobbled, giving her a light hearted appearance in the darkness of the room, "So you came, I was told you would"

William recalled how he'd ended up in this particularly odd setting. Three days ago he was drawn to this house by the ostentatious furniture and trinkets that could be observed through the front windows. The porcelain above the fireplace boasted of prosperity, the furnishings shined with the obvious texture of polished redwood, all portents pointed to a wealthy individual who could obviously spare some money.

From the lack of light in the house, Will deduced that it must have been completely deserted. Silently, he slipped a thin piece of steel under the window frame, and slid it to the left where it came in contact with a sturdy metal mechanism. The window latch clicked upon. He raised the window using his right hand whilst he pocketed the lock pick with the other. From his pocket he also withdrew a small compact mirror which, in the palm of his hand, he used to peer to either side inside of the window. There wasn't an alarm system installed in this dwelling, fortunately, despite the obvious value of some of the items within.

He pulled himself through the window, careful not to damage the frame nor leave any fingerprints, so as to mislead the forensic investigators as to where an intruder had entered. Inside he gasped. The room was a museum of the

previous decades. Red leather upholstery could be seen lining both the furniture and walls of the room beneath a thin film of dust.

The desk at the centre of the room caught his immediate attention. Upon it a crystal dish held a brass key, presumably to the top drawer of the desk. He slid the sleeve of his plaid sweater over his hand and lifted the lid of the dish with the fabric between his fingers and the crystal. He decided against taking the dish itself. Although it appeared valuable, it was unique and considering that any resale of it might allow the authorities to link him to the theft at this house he decided it wasn't worth the risk. After lifting the key from the dish, he tried it in the solid iron lock of the top drawer. The key turned smoothly and easily, surprising William who had expected the ancient lock to put up more resistance. After a generous tug on the handle, the drawer opened, revealing a sizeable wad of twenty-dollar bills. Will snatched up the bundle, divided it in half, pocketed one portion and replaced the other. The amount that he'd attained would provide him with adequate sustenance and shelter for the coming week; there was no need to take more than necessary when it would only make the theft more obvious.

He was in the process of returning the drawer to its previous position when the window behind him crashed down, shattering its four panes, spreading shards of glass across the carpeted floor. Immediately he sprang behind the desk, peering out over the wooden surface to spy the cause of the breakage, expecting to see a very angry muscle bound resident standing on the other side

of the window. Surprised, he found with relief that there was no one present beyond the spider web of shattered glass that still cluttered one of the four windowpanes. Hanging from the corner of the window, a frayed cord dangled, blowing in the breeze that invaded the window. Obviously the thread that supported the window when it was opened had broken of its own accord weakened by age, causing the window to fall, the panes to shatter, and Will's heartbeat to shoot off of a measurable scale. He did his best to hide the frayed cord within the frame of the window, so that without close inspection the break could not be seen.

After locking the drawer and replacing the key in the crystal dish, he clambered back through the window, closing and locking it behind him, and with some contemplation, he decided that the best way to mask his entrance into the room would be to make it appear as though the breakage of the window was an act of vandalism and not of theft. Rummaging in the dirt below him, his hand fell upon a rock that was roughly four times the size of his fist. Gripping it firmly with his right hand he hurled it through the window and heard it land amongst the glass pieces on the red velvet carpet.

As he left the cover of the bushes below the window and made for the street that stretched out towards the flashing lights of the downtown district a black and white car pulled out in front of him. The sight of the flashing strobe lights above the car immediately petrified him. A single officer in a black leather

jacket stepped from behind the wheel of the police car and made his way towards him. He would have run, he should have run, but he found his legs frozen. In his past five years of thievery he had always been quick witted enough to avoid encounters with police, and now that he was in such a position he had completely no idea of how to deal with it. Before he had a chance to move a muscle, the officer had gripped his wrist in a vise and flung him chest first against the boot of the car. After cuffing his hands, the officer proceeded to check for concealed weapons that might be on William's person.

Finding nothing but a thin metal lock pick, a small mirror, and a large sum of money, he turned William to make sure he was aware of why he was being arrested, "The residents of that house," pointing to his left, "Reported a disturbance in the house that you just illegally entered. You are being charged with breaking and entering and will accompany me to the station."

Confused and shocked as to what to say, Will stammered out a request to see some identification. He read the officer's badge aloud, "Detective James Benson". "Benson," he repeated to himself, "Benson from Virginia". The officer stopped pushing William into the back seat of the vehicle, and pulled him back to a standing position.

Puzzled as to how this thief knew that detail of his identity he questioned him to which Will replied with angst, "You, you told me of my family's death five years ago. My life has been ruined since that rueful night you phoned my home." Will shrank to his knees, hands still cuffed behind him, powerless to stop the painful images of his past from invading his mind. He hated the immorality of

what he'd become; though this was the first occasion that this suppressed anger seeped through from his subconscious in five years. The sight of the policeman incandescing under the strobe lights of the car before him brought back the hatred that he had become anaesthetised against with all of his other emotions on their previous encounter.

After William struggled to remind Benson of their unfortunate meeting five years ago, the officer was torn between two options. He felt that somehow he was responsible for William's descent into a state of alienation, numbed of input from the outside world, but his duty as a policeman ordered that he arrest the man without compassion for his situation. Was there a way that he could have told the traumatic truth to soften the psychological damage? He knew that if this man were to be sent to prison now he would only end up delving deeper into a criminal world, spurred on by training in the locked-down university of felonies. This conflict of his mind eventually fell in favour of his humanitarian side. He grabbed William by the shoulder of his jacket; it had to be understood that for what he was about to say, he was to be taken seriously.

"The way I see it, Will, you have two choices. You can accompany me to the station, add your own to our stamp collection of fingerprints, certainly end up in court, and almost definitely end up in prison. Or," he stared piercingly into the younger man's eyes, which stared piercingly back at him, "You can take that wad of money that you just stole from that house, return it to the owner, personally, and the law will turn a blind eye, this time, and only this time."

So here he sat, locked in a situation that evoked in him fear that had been rarely rivaled in his life, even though his only adversary now was a frail old woman at the opposite end of a redwood table.

He tried to cover his fear with arrogance: "So what's your story? You're living here in a very well-off manner, yet your clothes are so dated it's as if you're no better off than I am."

"I'd figured that you were nothing more than the common thief; hiding behind a wall of your own fear. Well, let me make it simple for you. As I understand it you took something of mine from this house and have been sent here to return it. Shall we get that out of the way now?"

William was shocked. He didn't know what to expect from this woman. Here she was dealing with someone who had wronged her, without the faintest degree of anger in her tone, whilst also addressing him with confidence that belied a woman of her age. Speechless he slid the money across the table, simultaneously trying to avoid eye contact.

She picked up the bundle of money, turned it over, looked at it and placed it back on the table before sliding it back to him.

"If you really need the money enough to steal for it, then take it."

Still speechless, William didn't move towards the money. It just lay there on the table staring up towards him, taunting. Finally he placed his hand on the money, paused, picked it up, and reaching over the table, placed it again before the woman, uttering, "I'm sorry", as best he could verbalise it.

Since the policeman called her two days earlier, she had understood the true nature of this young man who sat before her. He wasn't a thief by nature but by misfortune, and something compelled her to try to help him. She felt it a small victory for her, breaking through Will's natural defense to an awkward situation. However, this would do nothing to help his situation, since he would just form a passive barrier against society once again if she didn't continue now. She didn't ask him how he ended up taking the wrongful path in his life; it would most likely make the situation more difficult than it already was. Besides, she already knew much from what the police officer had told her. Instead she decided to share a story with him in the hope that somehow he could relate it to his own situation. As she began, the young man just sat there, listening, not sure as to her purpose of telling such a story.

"Remmington's was a particularly extravagant nightclub, far more old fashioned than most, without the flashing strobe lights that cause blindness after extended exposure, nor the blaring speakers radiating techno dance music. It was the type of place that one might expect to find famous faces from the early days of motion pictures such as Humphrey Bogart or Carey Grant ordering a drink at the polished wood bar. Softly, ever softly, a woman adorned in an astounding black evening dress stepped forward from the doorway and entered Remmington's Nightclub. Seven feet from her, the singer and jazz accompaniment were drowned out by an opus of exceptional beauty that this



new figure radiated. Her black velvet heels melted into pitch satin stockings that showed the shapely form of her legs. A singular, vainglorious, scintillating brooch was the focus of her outfit, which attracted attention to such a degree that the occupants of the nightclub could determine that the ornament contained neither glass nor crystal diamantes, but genuine diamonds. Despite the dazzling beauty of these precious stones, the brooch did nothing to distract from the stunning face of this woman. A shapely nose adorned a visage that threatened to put plastic surgeons out of business, whilst piercing eyes of pale grey smiled beautifully at others.

“She silently advanced towards the bar with a stride that dictated confidence. Men gazed awestruck in her wake as she paced forward and ordered herself a dry martini. After the drink was placed before her, she gracefully swept it up before turning to examine the room. She had captivated the gaze of everyone in the room, and though they tried, they could not avert their eyes for the sake of politeness as she turned to face them. By no means did she appear embarrassed about being the central focus of attention, in fact she seemed to revel in the aura of notice that was paid to her.

“No one in the nightclub felt spirited enough to approach her, so she seated herself next to a young man, on an ornate stool facing the bar. She turned to the young man, who of course was already focussed on her and introduced herself.

'Don't you just love these old joints?' The man nodded dumbfounded. With a sweeping gesture she gracefully held her hand to her bosom and continued, 'It's a real pleasure to meet you, I'm Adora.' The man attempted to speak, and realised he was unable to do so, managing only to gasp out his name. 'Joseph? I take it that's your name, and not something you're trying to recommend I order at the bar,' She replied. Her attempt at humour did little to ease his tension, and there were undeniably fingernail imprints left on the underside of the polished wooden bar-table after he rose from his chair.

"And rise from his chair he did, at her request to dance. They strode towards the marble dance floor beside the jazz group, she with the grace of a butterfly, he with the elegance of a brick. The man was too busy trying to perform an imaginary bone reconstruction on his legs, which could suddenly no longer support his weight, to notice the entire male reception of the nightclub, seething with envy. The two danced till the fingers of the jazz band's members cramped and could play no more. She leaned ever close to his ear, and suggested that they leave. She strode towards the polished wooden door with him following, dragged forward by an imaginary rope around his neck. Little did he know that this woman did have a noose around his collar that would destroy his life.

"He worshipped her from that night. She in turn enjoyed his company on a casual basis. Of course she had other men that she toyed with equally.

However, after a year of their very casual relationship, she began to grow bored of him. Like all toys he began to lose his appeal, and simply was no longer fun to play with. In his confusion and desperation to keep her, he led himself down a path of misery, he proposed to her.

“The prospect of marriage was something new, exciting and appealing to her, an escape from the banality of their relationship. He loved her, but she was incapable of loving him back; Adora was incapable of caring for another. She didn’t care even for herself. She was emotionless, cold, and lifeless. Unfortunately for him, he was blinded by her unimaginable beauty to notice Adora’s desire to only please herself. And so they were married, standing before the altar, he facing her consumed in wonder at the prospect of their life together, and she facing him reveling in the feeling of excitement that the ceremony gave. After toasting to his new wife, they rose and danced passionless. Forever infatuated with her, he was unable to regret his decision to marry her.”

“How do you know so much of this story?” the young man questioned. “Is it just a tale that you’ve improvised at this moment, or does it go deeper than that?”

She looked to him in sadness and said, “The story that you’re hearing is that of my son, who at your age fell down a path of misery. Perhaps you’re not connecting with his situation, but pray you never do because I haven’t even begun to spill the details of his torment.”

“Did you see any possibility of treachery in this woman before your son married her?”

“I must admit I did. I tried futilely to convince him not to throw his life away on this woman, but he wasn't to be swayed. Finally, I senselessly said to him, 'If you marry this woman you will never step through the door of my house again'. He turned to me shocked, however, a month later he was standing next to his bride, repeating his vows, she next to him regurgitating her own vows on the altar.”

“As you can no doubt imagine, she was not faithful to her husband. Why would she be? The thrill that he provided had been exhausted long ago before they were married. Even with his love bound to her under God's witness, Adora still philandered about carelessly. Few men were able to resist her attraction even though they were well aware that she was married.

“Men continued to do little to sate her desire for excitement, until one night. It is an evening that stands out ever so vividly in my mind and has forever seared through my soul. She stood in her usual glamour in a dark blue sequin dress, supported by matching velvet stiletto heels, whilst entertaining for a variety of guests at a party. She seemed rather overcome by a certain young man whom I hadn't been acquainted with. As the evening progressed the two made their way to the stairs for the upstairs bedrooms. At the top, she turned, arms linked with her adulterer, and winked to me. Spinning back around she made her

way to the master bedroom, where I lost sight of her as she closed the door behind her and her new gentleman.”

“But surely your son was able to see her infidelity?”

The woman held her forehead with her hand, “If only he could have been around his wife in order to catch her. He was never home due to work during the times that she betrayed him, and thus could not see her disloyalty first hand. And as you can imagine, he was simply so infatuated with her that he would not listen to friends or even relatives telling him of her treachery.”

“The following day the very same young man came to see me. I glared icily at him as he approached.

‘I’m not going to even begin trying to apologise for my actions last night,’ he stumbled out ‘I know that there’s absolutely no excuse for what I’ve done. I just want you to realise how malevolent a woman your son is married to. Ma’am, she seduced me last night for the thrill of tearing my dreams apart. You must understand, I’ve been training to be a priest for oh so many years of my life. I was so close to my goal that I could almost reach out and be borne into the service of god. Oh dear, I was so close. And then, one night of loveless passion and my life means nothing.’ He bent forward and grabbed a fistful of his hair in his hand, whilst simultaneously squeezing his eyes tight. After a pained pause he continued, ‘Have you any idea what it is like to be within inches of the summit

of the greatest mountain of your life and then have all your accomplishments taken from you in a single evening?’

I stepped forward, lowering my voice to contain the grief that I felt at that moment and said, ‘My son was my life’s work. His happiness and his wellbeing were the only two goals that have ever been significant in my life. A mere two years ago he was married to the woman of his dreams who only tainted his life with nightmares. In a single day my son’s life was signed away to a monster. The pain is not in the loss but in the hopelessness. You, my boy, still have a chance to redeem your life, to begin your quest over. My son is chained to his devastation, with no hope of release on the horizon. Leave. Leave me now,’ I concluded. Overcome by his emotions, and unable to speak further the young man left my presence.”

“I’m amazed that you kept your composure so well when dealing with that man. After all he just led your daughter-in-law further away from the moral path,” the young man interrupted.

“I was indeed pulsing with anger at that very moment. I was torn between lashing out as violently as I possibly could against that young priest, or giving into the sorrow that nagged at my gut. But I managed neither. That priest in training was not to blame. I understood this at that time, and surely it was the only thing that restrained me. No one could resist that woman, and she would throw herself at men so freely. Why would one man be able to resist the temptation that others

could not? It wouldn't have mattered whether he was the Pope, or the Dalai Lama, he just had to be human."

"Adora had gotten a taste of destruction that night and had a craving for more. His relationship with her had lost him friends and family, so that she was all he had left. For the thrill of devastation she decided that it was time for him to be bereaved of her also; one final stint of ruin for Joseph.

"It was a mere two weeks later that her plan came into action. My son, returning home from work at his usual time, stepped up to the door of his house, paused to find the right key, unlocked the door and let himself in. Immediately he encountered his wife, scantily dressed and smiling, leaning against the frame of the door four metres from him down the hall. He could quite clearly see clothes liberally thrown around the corridor and he knew very well that they belonged to neither him nor his wife. He gasped 'No,' in disbelief, turned and fled through the open doorway. He wouldn't allow the facts of what he'd just seen to destroy the perfect image of his wife, so he clambered into the car as hastily as he could manage, and drove far from that place to thrive on his unspoiled memories of their life together.

"And here is where my son's story ends. He was so ashamed that his image of perfection, had been corrupted, that he just faded away from existence. Though I've searched for him, he hasn't allowed himself to be found in twenty years. Some people say that the not-knowing hurts the worst, but it's not true;

the most painful part about losing someone is having to abandon hope. For twenty years the best part of my day was when I'd wake up in the morning and head towards the front door, because for just a short while I thought that upon opening the door I'd find him standing there, on the doorstep, ready to come home. But I know this will never happen, he's gone and will be as long as I live; and so my hope fades."

Will didn't press with any more questions; he could see the sorrow in her eyes that this story brought back. Neither said anything. The silence of the room was getting awkwardly loud. Unsure as to whether he should say something to break the silence or just leave, he finally decided on the latter option. He had accomplished what he came here to do; consequently he was free to go as he pleased once again. He strode through the front entrance, leaving the polished redwood and red-leather in his wake.

As he turned to close the door behind him, he saw the old woman, remaining still in her chair, lost in her thoughts. She was unmoving, supporting her head with her hand. He pulled the door shut, removing the sonless mother from his life.

His hand left the brass handle of the door and he stared blankly at the garden path that navigated through the long grass toward the black, asphalt street. Leaning back against the door, a solitary tear rolled down his cheek as a



great sadness fell down upon him like a mountain of lead. He couldn't stand under this weight, and sliding to the ground with his back against the door, relentlessly started crying. He hated who he'd become more than he hated what happened to him five years ago. As he had anesthetised himself against the pain of what he'd suffered, he had created a barrier against emotion, and against life. His eyes were trying to purge the grief that had welled up within him for the past years, and wouldn't stop until he lay upon the doorstep, dehydrated, in a saline soaked shirt.

With his tears finally still, he managed the energy to stand once more and look before him. The sandstone garden path still stretched away from the doorstep. He was no longer focussed on the blackened street ahead, but the flowers, either side of the sandstone. Some of the stones shone with glorious shades of red and orange, other parts were covered in the greenest moss. A small bird with a scintillating blue patch on its breast landed beside the path and filled Will's ears with a lovely high pitched melody. He stepped forward onto the first stone, and resumed his life the way it had ended five years ago; following a bout of tears.

## Reflection Statement

Ten months ago, I began one of the most trying projects that I've ever had the option of undertaking. My original intention has undergone so many changes in order to achieve the final product, that the two are similar only in part.

My initial intention was to create a short story with a moral message behind it. It was to be written as a tale told to entertain whilst also warn, almost like a campfire ghost story, only without raising the hairs on the back of your neck. The inspiration for this way of writing came from a story that was told to me at the beginning of the year in such an intriguing manner, that it had a stranglehold on my mind. It was a story that I couldn't personally relate to, and yet it intrigued me. I realised that it wasn't the story itself that engaged me, but in the manner it was told. And so I attempted to write a story of a person narrating a tale to an eager listener for the purpose of warning them of the dangers that the future had to hold. I wasn't just warning the listener not to drive over the speed limit, or to avoid getting involved in organised crime. I was warning the listener of something far more dangerous: women.

That idea however changed considerably in the process. The basis that I had to build on came from that same story that I heard at the beginning of the year. I rewrote the story of what I had heard, trying to make it feel as if it were being told in first person. I found this no easy feat, however, and after rewriting the opening of the story, that I had titled the butterfly at that stage, at least ten times, I still wasn't happy with how it had turned out, so I tried a change to a third person narration. A reader of my story will observe how the old woman narrating her tale starts with a third person register and transforms slowly into a first person narration. This was completely unintentional at first, with my writing style slowly changing without my recognition, however, I feel that the change successfully heightens interest and changes the story positively.

The next major change to take place occurred after I realised that the woman was telling the story for absolutely no reason. The young man that she was telling the story to had no purpose for being there listening to the old lady relate her tale of sorrow. Thus I found it necessary to write the history for the young man in order to give him a purpose. As I wrote, the story took an unexpected turn; the young man became the focus of the narrative, concentrating no longer on the original story of "The Butterfly", (termed so because of the way that the woman of the story flittered from man to man without care of who she'd hurt). He now had a purpose, but I had a completely different story, not in the least related to the original. Either I had to integrate my original story of "The Butterfly" or discard it all together. Eventually the story of "The Butterfly" became the solution to the young man's problems, and in turn mine. Both stories shared a common theme of destruction-of-life, which furthered the relationship between the tales. Finally, the young man shut-off from life realises his problem after hearing the old woman telling the tale of "The Butterfly".

However, this meant that the woman's tale would also have a completely different effect than originally intended.

The research that I conducted into using a short story as a medium to convey ideas was rather limited. I read several short stories, in particular some from Edgar Allan Poe, which I thoroughly enjoyed. I already had a good degree of practice in writing in the style of a short story, and I felt I didn't really need to investigate the style further. And indeed, my research did little to change the way I approached the writing of my short story, save for the idea from Poe of providing an analytical investigation of the ideas addressed in the story as a prologue before I began. However, I found that this idea did little to engage the reader, and caused me more difficulty trying to work with it than it was worth, and so I abandoned it.

The idea of writing a story told within a story came from a novel by Clive Gardner called "Sheherazade's Tale", which was written cleverly to revive an old fairy tale, and transform it into a story that would engage more mature readers. Within the novel, Gardner exaggerated this technique by having a story within a story within a story within a story within a story, making use of excessive speech marks.

My research concentrated more on the details of the story. Upon introducing a history to the young man, I had at first decided to make him little more than a street beggar, instead of a thief, and so focussed my research to find out how the homeless lived. A particular book that caught my attention was the John Grisham novel, "The Street Lawyer". It depicted the homeless as wanderers; with patterns to where they visit. I tried to integrate this idea into my own story, and even though the young man is a thief, he still steals for food, and lives almost in the manner of a homeless person; constantly wandering without his own lodging to call home.

My research extended further for developing the history of the young man, with many of the scenes where a rapid pace dictating action was developed, being inspired by a fascination into the works of Dean Koontz and Matthew Reilly.

But by far, the biggest impact that any research had on my work, was the story that initially gave me the idea. Without it, my story would be completely different, and, it provided me with the inspiration to begin.

My short story was intended for a mature audience and I feel the register of the work shows this fairly well. I've made use of some complicated imagery such as the colour imagery in the last paragraph and it is essential for the reader to note this in order to understand the ending. It is intended to reach those that have lived long enough to understand that life isn't always kind, in order to connect with my main point; that no matter how ruthless life is, if you do not face

the problems that have been thrown at you, then your existence is without life. This was not my original purpose when I began the work, but midway through writing, this developed into the main value that I wished to portray to the reader.

I went against some of the usual conventions for short stories in my work. From my research and personal knowledge, I have found that character development is usually particularly brief in short stories, for the sake of salvaging room for plot development and themes. However, my story is based particularly upon character development, perhaps because it is a little longer than what is usually accepted as the length for a short story, and more along the lines of a novella. The themes that I wished to portray have come through well despite my extensive character development, most likely because the two in this instance are intrinsically linked.

I feel that the final product is particularly successful in that fleeting moments of my original idea litter what has evolved into something beyond what I had initially intended. My original concept was realised in a different but better manner in the final product, in that my basis; the story of "The Butterfly", changed its bearing on the work from the main idea, to little more than the solution for a bigger problem.