

## ENGLISH STANDARD: PARENTS

I know I shouldn't be here, and yet here I am.

Gazing, transfixed. The ancient looming trees suck in gusts of air, and gently breathe out, like a grand sigh of relief. The leaves are softly rustling. They are dancers, prancing to the mellifluous symphony of nature. A quiet hum of cicadas, drumming away relentlessly, fill my subdued surroundings. No longer is their pitch high and piercing. The rebellious sun is complaisant with its mellow glow illuminating the wondrous scene, even though it was supposed to have set by six O'clock.

Gazing, transfixed, spread out on the roof of a dirty, dingy toilet block. The concrete roof is deathly cold, as if the sun's warm embrace could not penetrate its stony faced exterior. I shrug my threadbare jumper around me in a futile attempt for it to act as a barrier against the numbing surface. Surrounded in an ineffectual cocoon, I wished so desperately that they would fight again.

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"Just shut up!", he thundered with scathing rage and a bitter tone that shattered her defences. The silence that followed was even more deafening.

"Fine," The hurt in her small voice was unmistakable, the tension in the air, palpable. The argument, like always, was initiated with mildly conflicting opinions, and amounted to an unwarranted and traumatic confrontation.

"Fine", she reiterated, her strength and resolution growing, "I won't say anything because apparently-" Not even a complete sentence was muttered before she was abruptly cut off. With a fleeting glance in my direction, and a transition in attitude, he pleaded, "Don't even start this again. Don't go on, and on, and on. Leave it. Please. Don't let them see us like this." His voice grew feeble and desperate, and his hand that he extended to her was quivering and quaking. With a glowering glare she ignored him. I felt broken.

I darted away from their penetrative sight, and retreated fearfully and frantically into my bedroom. The uncoiled hinges haphazardly adhered to the splintered door created a cacophonous sound in the dead silence. I gave a hard glare to no one as my turbulent emotions wound inside me like a tornado, destroying my inner being, ripping apart my soul. Utter devastation dominates my mind, and an uncontrollable wave of desolation in my solitude takes control. The air in my room is brisk, cold. The weather, inclement. The rain bombarded the ground outside my misty window like unforgiving enemy missiles. I was in the middle of a war.

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A few days later, a bomb was dropped.

"Please sign," she mumbled, as if trying to obfuscate her words, making them unintelligible. A nonplussed frown was evident on his obstinate face. His penetrative stare transformed into a distressing, guilty plea, when the neatly stapled stack of papers was proffered.

"Don't." He was imploring.

"Please?" A heartbroken crack in her small voice seized the air in your lungs and wrenched it from you, leaving a profound chasm where something vital once resided. I felt empty. The tentative question resounds around the room. There was only a whisper of movement made

from shuffling of feet and unstable floor boards.

He attempted to stifle a choking sob, but it begged to be heard. I was suffocating. I stared as he staggered out of the small, restrictive room, as if he were drunk on depression. It was silent. She rotated and glanced through me, like I wasn't even there; like I was a memory. It almost felt clinical, but a glimmer of fondness glowed like the moon, through cloudy night skies.

He strides in, as if his turbulent thoughts were finally ordering themselves, and a sense of resolution was emerging. With a determined glare, he signed. And just like that, my family was gone.

I felt broken, empty, desperate, suffocated. I sprinted to the door and flung it forcefully open. I hear the wall shudder. The wood has surely splintered. I run. I run, and I run, and I run. I end up at the neighbourhood park, a happy bright green sign welcoming me in. I know I shouldn't be here, and yet here I am. This is where kids come by day for the garish play equipment, and potheads come by night to get high. I couldn't help myself coming here.

I trudge through the thick, sludgy mud, glad that the once chilling and incessant downpour had ceased. I'd never noticed or appreciated before the beauty of the park. I spot the perfect vantage point. Without hesitation, I haul myself, using all the fleeting strength in my body, up to the roof of a dirty, dingy toilet block, and I peer around. Gazing, transfixed. The concrete roof is deathly cold, as if the sun's warm embrace could not penetrate its stony faced exterior. I shrug my threadbare jumper around me in a futile attempt for it to act as a barrier against the numbing surface. Surrounded in an inefficacious cocoon, I wished so desperately that they would fight again.