

哈佛 50 篇 essay--3。难忘的时刻

Sensibility

-- by Amanda Davis

The putrid stench of rotten salmon wafts through the boardwalk, permeating the Five Star Café with a fishy odor. I stand, chopping red peppers for tomorrow's soba salad, in the back of the minuscule kitchen. Adam, a pretty boy with cropped hair, stands beside me, relating tales of snowboarding in Sweden while slicing provolone cheese. Tourists walk by the café, some peering in through the windows, others interested only in fish swimming upstream – clicks of cameras capture the endless struggle for survival. It is 3:00 in the afternoon, the lunch rush has died down, the evening rush has not yet started. I relax in the rhythmic trance of the downward motion of the knife, as I watch the red peppers fall into precise slices. The door opens. A customer.

Adam looks toward me: "Your turn."

I nod, pull myself away from the peppers, and turn to the register. A man stands, looking at me. His eyes, hidden under tangled gray hair, catch mine, and my eyes

drop, down to his arms. Spider lines of old tattoos stand out, words and pictures and symbols sketched on thin, almost emaciated arms. I know I am staring. I look up.

"Can I help you?" I brightly ask.

He looks at me warily. "A cup of coffee."

Adam hands him a cup and goes back to slicing.

"That will be one dollar, sir." He fumbles in his pocket, and pulls out a wrinkled dollar bill. He extends his hand, then – suddenly – pulls back. His face changes, and he leans toward me, casting a frightened glance at the cash register.

"Is that – is that --" he stumbles over his words. "Is that alive?"

I look to the machine. Its common gray exterior rests on the counter, the green numerals displaying the amount owed. I think of my first days at the Five Star, when I was sure that it was alive – a nefarious machine manipulating the costs to cause my humiliation. As the days proceeded, we slowly gained a trust for one another, and its once evil demeanor had changed – to that of an ordinary machine. I think of the world – controlled by machines, the cars and computers and clocks – would they, could they, rise up against us? The espresso machine is behind me, it could attack – the hot water spurring forth, blinding me as the cash register falls and knocks me onto the floor as I – No, of course not.

Sensibility wins again.

"No, sir. It's just a machine," I explain. He eyes me, untrusting of my words, in need of reassurance. "It takes money." I take his dollar, and show him how, with a push of a button, I can place the money inside. He takes his coffee with both hands, and

"A machine..." he quietly repeats.

The cash register sits, silent on the counter.

ANALYSIS

In both subject matter and style, "Sensibility" is a breath of fresh air. Imagine reading stacks of essays about mundane topics, and then coming upon one about red peppers, provolone cheese and a cash register – how could it not stand out? Rather than describing a life-altering experience or an influential

relationship, the writer reveals herself and her talents indirectly by bringing us into a captivating scene.

With the skills of a creative writer, the author uses crisp detail to make the Five Star Café spring to life and to place us in the seaside kitchen. Even if all the essay does is grab our attention and force us to remember its author, this essay is a success. But “Sensibility” has other strengths. The dialogue with the emaciated man raises provocative questions about modern life. How do we relate to the machines around us? How does “sensibility” change in this new environment? And how do machines affect our relations with people of different classes and backgrounds? The essay does not pretend to answer these questions, but in raising them it reveals its author to possess an impressive degree of sophistication and, at bottom, an interesting mind.

All the same, “Sensibility” is not without its faults. For one, the scene seems so surreal that we are led to wonder whether this is a work of fiction. And admissions essay will be stronger the more we can trust that we are hearing the author’s honest, personal voice; the fictional quality here jeopardizes that. Moreover, although the author proves that she is thoughtful and talented and has a vivid imagination, many questions are left unanswered. Does the author want to be a writer? How would her creativity translate into a contribution to the community? We would need to rely on the rest of her application to fill in those gaps. Still, on the whole, “Sensibility” is successful both because of and in spite of its riskiness.

A Memorable Day

A Memorable Day

-- by Ayana Elizabeth Johnson

Walking through meadow and forest and mud, helping and being helped across streams, looking at lakes, stars and trees, smelling pines and horses, and generally traveling through a half-seen world, all happened before four A.M. The ten of us stopped near a waterfall to absorb the beauty of the rising sun. The sky was on fire before the embers died out and only the blues and yellows remained. I saw the beams of the sun slide down from the sky and into a meadow, and felt my happiness slide down my cheeks. To the sky I sang my thanks.

As our journey to the Grand Pyramid continued, I met new flowers. At the base of its peak, I looked up with excitement, and then out for stability. Intimidated

and yet determined, I started to crawl up the mountain. I found geodes, and that big rocks aren't always stable. I wasn't alone, but I was climbing by myself. At the top, the four of us who had continued from the base were greeted by the beauty of needle peaks and mountain ranges and miles of a clear view in every direction, without the bitterly cold winds and the fear of heights I had expected would be there too. There was simply nature and sunshine and friendship, and the elation they bring.

Balloons were blown up and attached to me. People danced around me and shouted, and a smile I couldn't control burst forth.

On the way down, instead of tears of joy that had accompanied the sunrise, there were songs of joy, and I thought. I realized that the rewards and thrills and memories are in the journey and not in reaching the destination. I had believed this before and even said it out loud, but this was different. I looked at everything along the way. I stopped and rested and attempted to etch each different view into my memory. The hackneyed phrase of "enjoying every step along the way" was something I lived, and as a result I felt richer than I had ever been. I promised myself that this lesson I would never forget, but as I was descending from the highest point to which I'd ever journeyed, my thoughts too returned to a more pragmatic level. I remembered that each journey in my life wouldn't be as challenging or exciting or rewarding as this one had been; nevertheless, it is the flowers and geodes and smiles and balloons that make the journey worthwhile.

I had only been singing for myself and for the mountains, but everyone had heard me, and, when I reached the bottom, I was greeted with congratulations and laughter — after all, I did have balloons tied to me.

And the journey continued. The waterfall we had only really heard before day-break was now visible, and I was convinced to jump in and make it tangible too. I plunged my head under its torrential flow, only to receive a headache from its coldness as a reward for my boldness. I removed my-then-numbered-self from the water and was lacing up my boots when it began to hail. I had been wishing that snow would fall on this August day, but hail was close enough. The few of us who had braved the waterfall then ran to catch the group in the forest before the imminent thunderstorm arrived.

I saw in the daylight what I had (or rather hadn't) seen in the moonlight. The streams we had helped each other cross in the dark were no more than rivulets through a field in the light. The mysterious woods were turned serene by the rays of the sun, and I thought of the great chasm that often exists between appearance and reality. The mud puddles that had been obstacles were now only another detail of the landscape, and I thought about things that

are a challenge to me which others find simple. The meadow where I had tripped while trying to star-gaze and walk, became a place to cloud – gaze and wonder at the storm, and I thought of the many ways different people can appreciate the same thing.

The humbling thunder approached. It growled. Suddenly, the frighteningly beautiful companion of the thunder struck a hill not so far ahead of us. A friend, the only other person who had seen it, and I ran screaming and laughing into the trees, but knew we would be all right because we were together.

A trek by moonlight, a sky on fire, leaking eyes, 13,851feet up, balloons, geodes, songs, icy waterfalls, hail and lightning were my seventeenth birthday.



ANAYLYSIS

This essay is effective because it carries the metaphor of the journey of life from the climb up the mountain all the way through. The essay is well organized and structured, designed to represent the reconstruction of the author's exciting day, starting with her initial reaction to the scenery to her elation of finishing at the end. Each paragraph, though varied in length, tells a part of the journey and a change in the author's growing perspective on life.

The author uses a lot of active description, which the reader can easily relate to and almost experience a part of her journey. Phrases such as "only to receive a headache from its coldness as a reward for my boldness," speak poignantly because the reader can almost feel the sting of the dip in the waterfall. The comparison between daylight and moonlight also works well because it allows the writer a

chance to demonstrate her ability to describe contrast.

The reader may be slightly disoriented by the lack of context for the story, as we are not told where the author is or why she is climbing a mountain. However, through the carefully controlled description the author reveals her reflective nature and personal realization as she ascends and descends the mountain, hence, showing the parallel physical and emotional progression. Her concluding sentence, though not particularly poignant, serves as a strong summary of a well-written piece.

A night Unforgotten

By Frederick Antwi

An hour before the commencement of the personality contest, I deposited my bag carefully in a corner of the changing room. From my vantage point, I could see the muscular seniors comparing their lovely three-piece suits and musing about which one of them would win the title. A bony, stuttering junior with no suit and no new shoes, I swallowed hard and resolved to give the pageant my best shot. Since the first round of the program was a parade in traditional wear, I nervously pulled out my kente, draped the beautifully woven red and yellow fabric around my thin frame, pinned on my “contestant number five” badge and hurried to take my place in line.

Wishing hopelessly that my mother was among the spectators and not working in some hospital in a foreign country, I stepped out onto the polished wooden stage. Immediately, one thousand two hundred curious eyes bore into me. My cheeks twitched violently, my throat constricted and my knees turned to jelly. I fought for control. Bending my arms slightly at the elbows, I strutted across the stage in the usual fashion of an Asante monarch and mercifully made it back to the changing room without mishap. The crowd erupted into a frenzied cheer. As I returned for the “casual wear” round, something magical happened.

It was singular emotion that no words can describe. It began as an aching, beautifully tenderness in the pit of my stomach, gradually bubbling into my chest, filling me with warmth and radiance, melting away all the tension. Slowly, it effervesced into my mouth, onto my tongue and into words. As I spoke to the crowd of my pastimes and passions, words of such silky texture poured out from my soul with unparalleled candor and cadence. The voice that issued from my lips was at once richer, deeper, stronger than I had ever produced. It was as though an inner self, a core essence, had broken free and taken control. Severed from reality, I floated through the remainder of that remarkable evening.

One hour later, the baritone of the presenter rang out into the cool night air. “Mr. GIS Personality 1993, selected on the basis of confidence, charisma, cultural reflection,