
The Runaway: College Admission Essay Sample

Last year, I was a runaway for a grand total of 27 hours.

I stormed out of my house in complete confusion. I couldn't understand why, after all the awards I'd managed to win, after I'd been set as the model of success by our relations, my own mother preferred my sister. Why wasn't I doted over? Why did my mother seem just a little sad every time I came home with more good news? Why? I simply couldn't understand it.

That day had started out normally enough. It was the ending that had been abnormal.

"Get out!" my mother had screamed. "Get out and never come back!"

I didn't even argue. It was a testament to my naivety, my rashness, and above all, my immaturity that I took her words at face value and actually left when she'd told me to. I hadn't even turned back, so convinced was I that I was the victim.

It was dusk when I finally calmed from my righteous indignation and called my friend to come pick me up. I stayed at his equally ratty apartment until I heard sirens in the driveway around midnight the following day.

My mother had called the police on me.

After that, I had literally no choice but to return home. I was greeted with shouts about what an idiot I was as soon as I stepped through the door.

My temper started to rise at the clear provocation, but before I could really get in gear I caught sight of my mother. My mother, who was usually incredibly well groomed and collected, had clear bags under her eyes. She was pale. Her clothes were mismatched and she was nursing a cup of coffee at one in the morning. It was clear she'd been worried about me, even after I'd "acted like a complete selfish ass".

I shut my mouth immediately. Despite the constant attentions she showered over her age, the stress of raising an arrogant, know-it-all kid was shining through. A kid who constantly needed to be praised by others. A kid who never got awards because she deserved them, but more because she sought them. A shallow girl who thought she was better than her sister because she had more medals - more like lumps of metal - and never considered to factor in how much more self-confident and fulfilled her sister was.

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I suddenly felt very small.

"I'm sorry," I told her. It came out awkward and stilted and demeaning, but I said it, and when I looked up, she was downright smiling. Smiling.

My chest filled with an emotion that was hard to place, but it was filled nevertheless. For the first time in a long while, my mother and I stood in mutual respect and understanding, and I was truly happy.

I had admitted I was wrong, I'd bowed my head, and the world had not fallen to pieces. On the contrary, I felt stronger and more sure than ever. It was a strangely reassuring thing to be, not being empty.

I was able to mature and grow and see past what I wanted to recognize what my mother and I both needed. More than shaking the Congressman's hand, more than winning the award I'd been hoping for, it was my stuttered, horribly stilted apology that brought out the best in who I was. It had only taken me 16 years to realize that the external - the awards, the titles, the prestige - doesn't determine a person. It's what's inside that allows for understanding and other important things, like love. It's the inside that makes you truly great.

The rest come second.

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