

Hall Caine Prize-

By Rebecca Minay

A pen is a weapon, it tells the world what the author was afraid to say. It is a piece of equipment that can create but can also destroy. It makes friendships, invents enemies, causes tears, sets a smile. Words can make me feel more pain than pain itself. Words can crumble communities, yet can build them up. Words have the power to kill hope, also help it thrive.

These words, written by a pen had killed my dreams.

“Dear Miss Murphy,

We have received your application of acceptance and are pleased to inform you that you have been accepted to start The University of Cambridge in September.

Yours sincerely,
Miss Savlo (Director of University of Cambridge.)”

I crumple the paper into a ball and throw it at the waste paper bin in the corner of my room, it misses and hits the pastel wall next to it. I let loose an angry scream of frustration and bring my knees to my chest, my arms wrap around my legs and I rest my chin on top of my knees. Silent streams of tears edging my face.

My Mother had sent the application, if I didn't get in she said I could pursue my dream of working as a teacher in an arts university. I love drama and music. I did not, ever, want to be a lawyer.

“Jessamine?” My mother screeched through the thin walls of our musty apartment. I didn't want to answer as I knew she'd ask about the letter. “Jessamine Murphy! I know you can hear me, either you are too happy for words or have just realised that you're going to take that worthless ‘dream.’”

“I'm here Mum.” I reply confidently enough to trick her.

“MOTHER. Jessamine, you call me mother!” She shouts. I felt anger bubble inside me, “Did you get in?” She asks.

This is it, the moment of truth, I'd have to live through the pain of her being right and her laughing. I would have to become a lawyer and deal with the twist of agony that is my life. I got in, I would have to tell her that, my *mother* would have to know. As much as I wanted to leave the letter and forget about it, I can't. I open my mouth to let the word of affirmation fall off my lips. "No..."

"What?" She shrieks to the point I think the windows will shatter.

"I didn't get in." What am I saying? I wanted to tell the truth. Oh well, no going back now.

Silence ran through the tiny apartment, she didn't say anything, neither did I. I'm still stunned at what I said.

I pick myself up and walk slowly to the door, turning the brown doorknob and walking onto the squishy-in-a-bad-way carpet. My mother is standing in the hall with me, her eyes are filled with tears. Her worn out cardigan I bought her two years ago for Christmas suddenly seems far too big, drowning her. She walks over to me cautiously, I close my eyes, waiting for the impact. When her arms curl around me I gasp. She hasn't hugged me in years. I return the embrace, rubbing her back semi-awkwardly while she cries on my shoulder. After what seems like hours she pulls away, leaving a wet patch on my green t-shirt. She suddenly seems embarrassed as she turns, darting back into her room, hand cupped around her mouth. Leaving me alone.

I close my eyes again, trying to calm myself. *I've let her down.* She's wanted me to be a lawyer all my life. I've always wanted to be an artist. *I've let her down.*

I run into the living room, stopping at the computer older than me, I begin to type a letter to say I won't attend that college. I can't be a second chance for her life. After finishing the not very detailed letter, I turn the web address into my E-mail. I sent an application to an arts school months ago, and asked for a reply by E-mail. I can't risk her finding it and destroying it before I have the chance. As the ancient computer loads my inbox, I drum my fingers lightly on the table, creating a small beat.

I have to get in.

It finally loads, showing six new messages. One from Amazon, two from my friends, two from the hockey league I'm in, and one from The Nottingham University of Arts and Entertainment.

I click it fast, even though that won't change the load time, counting out the seconds that will seal my fate. As I reach 58 seconds the message comes up.

I got in.

I actually got in, I was actually accepted! These words are my ticket out of this hell-house. I smile widely to myself. Typing out a quick polite reply. After hitting send, I delete the message I was sent. Hoping mother won't see it. I spin around in my chair and laugh, not too loud, you can never be too careful with her.

This is what I need.

Space.

Space from her.

Space from this.

I can't believe this is happening, out of all the artists and actresses 5 times better than me, they chose me. I put my heart, soul and all my knowledge into my application, I deserve this.

I jump up and run into my room. Heart pounding, smile wide. I let go of a breath I didn't know I was holding. Feeling instant calmness. *This is it.*