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**The Runaway Bunny**

It is raining outside. Class starts at seven in the morning so I am sitting in class a little early, watching the rain rhythmically hit the window. For some reason, “story time” is written on today’s agenda. I roll my eyes. My high-school English teacher is crazy, so who knows what the next hour will bring. The bell rings and cold, damp students walk in, shaking off their umbrellas. Girls make faces as they discover the papers in their binders are wet and guys shake out their hair. It is time for class to start. We all curiously turn our attention to the teacher. She’s a cute little old lady in her late fifties, about as tall as me and skinny as a twig. Her silver eye liner complements the shine of her short black hair underneath the florescent ceiling lights. She walks over to her shelf and picks up a small rectangular book. I smile because I recognize the cover from when I was a child. It is light blue; there is a picture of long, slanting stems of grass being blown to the right by an imaginary wind. In the left corner, there are two little white bunnies. She begins to read us a children’s story. Her voice begins to change pitch, slowing down then speeding up. Her narration of the book is impeccable—so sweet and serene. I love the pictures; the class giggles when the bunny turns into a bird and when it suddenly becomes a funny looking sail boat on the ocean. I haven’t picked up this book since I was a little girl.

One of the earliest memories I have of books is picking up *Harry Potter*. There is an image in my head that has stayed with me throughout the years. The book was brand new, with a price tag on it and everything. The paper cover felt like a crisp, new dollar bill. I also remember it smelling nice. (I remember sticking my nose up at old books because, being eight, I thought they smelled like paper farts.) My small hands looked even smaller holding the book as it sat in my lap and my hands gripped the edges. Curiosity got the best of me and I finished that book in five days.
For some odd reason, I picked books by the way they felt; neither the picture nor the content made an impact. My imagination began to grow as I began to quickly absorb different stories. Reading allowed me to expand my horizons throughout my childhood. I began to form my own ideas and think differently at a very young age. Reading books allowed me to tune out the physical world, as I listened to the words that created delicate, captivating stories in my head.

I remember walking down the street and sitting on a curb a few feet from an old sickly-yellow fire hydrant whenever I heard my parents start to fight. I would read for hours; some days I was out there till sunset, unaware that I had sat for hours, completely ignoring those pesky pin-head sized bugs that annoyingly flew for my ears and nose. I would lose myself in these stories because they were better than reality. Reading taught me to take a step back and think. I began to form my own ideas because of reading. I formed my own morals and values. I loved searching for the secret message behind everything an author poured onto the page; it was like looking for treasure or finding a message in a bottle. I enjoyed reading, then sitting in silence, thinking about the words and the context. As I got older, the stories got more complex and began to have more meaning. *Lord of the Flies* was a book I read over and over.

The last book I read in my free time was *My Sister’s Keeper*. I remember crying. My hands were shaking as my tears fell onto the page. Who knew that books could break you? After that, I didn’t pick up a book willingly for years. Reading had immersed me in a fictional world. All those years it had been my escape from a broken, imperfect world. Now the reading world felt the same as reality; nowhere seemed safe or perfect. I lost my way. Stuck in a cold, numbing fog, I hid from reality and everyone or anything that tried to bring it back to me. I got involved with the wrong crowd and did the opposite of what my parents told me. The fighting at home got worse. I had pretty much shut out my family because they had done the same to me. I rarely ever read. The only time I did was when I was forced to read something for school. I missed reading but for some reason couldn’t find the courage to get back into it. I felt ashamed that I had left something I loved too suddenly, but I was too tired emotionally and mentally to put any effort into reading. When I stopped reading, what I found important in life seemed to perch on the highest mountains. And then I heard a voice in my head, telling a story about a little bunny that ran away.

It is now raining harder. The drops hit the window in an almost mad hum of tribal drumming, beating faster and faster. My classmates have long, pleasant grins on their faces because the bunny has stopped trying to run
The Runaway Bunny

away. He returns to his mother, a little bunny leaping into mother’s warm, open arms. The embrace makes the class say “aww.” That is when I realize that I had followed the little bunny and I too had run away. A children’s book has brought me back to reality.

The message of the book couldn’t have been more relevant to my problems. I had lost hope, faith, and myself. This children’s book helped me understand an important message in life. No matter where you are, where you go, or where you hide, hope will always find you, and faith will always seek your heart. When times get tough, I close my eyes and let my mind escape. I reread the book in my head, imagining the vivid pictures of a tiny courageous bunny.