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## Escape in the Wilderness

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# Escape in the Wilderness

## **Abstract**

In lieu of an abstract, below is the essay's first paragraph.

"Out on her deck overlooking the wilderness, the mother was looking for her son. Her 13-year-old ran away again. She figured he was somewhere out in the back of their five acres, but she had no idea where. She clutched her whiskey glass and lit a cigarette. She screamed his name in a voice that sounded like she had a sore throat. She listened for a response as she finished her drink. In her Mrs. cleaver house dress and white ruffled apron, she thought to herself, *boy is he going to get it.*"

## **Cover Page Footnote**

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# JASON COTUGNO

## ESCAPE IN THE WILDERNESS

Out on her deck overlooking the wilderness, the mother was looking for her son. Her 13-year-old ran away again. She figured he was somewhere out in the back of their five acres, but she had no idea where. She clutched her whiskey glass and lit a cigarette. She screamed his name in a voice that sounded like she had a sore throat. She listened for a response as she finished her drink. In her Mrs. Cleaver house dress and white ruffled apron, she thought to herself, *boy is he going to get it.*

Meanwhile, Dominic sat among the tall oaks and fall leaves scattered about the ground. He leaned against the trunk of a thick and watched the leaves as the cold air blew them to new homes. His nose was cold and red; he felt it start to run out of his left nostril. He used his jacket sleeve to wipe his nose, but he couldn't stop the constant drips. Still, that wasn't his main concern. He rubbed his cold fingers under his eye and felt the bruise start to form. It was still throbbing, but it was a pain he had grown accustomed to. He wanted to cry so badly, but he knew it would do no good. Instead, he started to think about all the other bruises, cuts, broken bones, fractures, and sprains.

There was the time he forgot to organize the books in the library of their enormous house; for that, he got beaten with a wooden spoon. When he had made more than one error during his weekly piano lesson, his mother would slap his hands with a ruler for the number of additional mistakes. Still, his worst punishments came when report cards came out. For every grade below an A, his mother would lock him in the downstairs storage closet for one hour. Sometimes, he spent up to six hours locked in the room no bigger than a closet. His only company was the rats that made their way throughout the basement and into the closet.

These rats scared him at first, but he eventually got used to them. They never bothered him or hurt him in any way, unlike *her*. Instead, they would just go about their business. If only life were that simple. If only people realized basic human needs.

Dominic's only solace came from being outdoors and away from the woman he hated so much. On her calmer days, Dominic's mother would kick him outside onto their property to "reflect" on what he did wrong. He would spend hours climbing trees, chasing deer and squirrels, and looking at the sky. He often lost track of time, so his mother would yell for him to come inside. Mostly, he ignored her screams, which forced her to come out and grab him by the neck. He knew if his mother was drinking that he would be beaten anyway.

As a result, he took to creating his own world. The large oak was his home. His mother was the doe and his father the stag. The foxes were his brothers and the squirrels his little cousins. He knew they didn't talk, but that wasn't a bad thing to him. Most of the words he heard his mother say were four letter gems that children weren't

supposed to repeat.

This time he knew things would have to be different. He had suffered enough and needed to figure out how to escape. Sure, he knew 9-1-1, but no one would believe him. After all, his mother was one of the wealthiest women in their town. Not only that, she seemed to have connections with every law enforcement group in the area. No, Dominic knew that only he could be the master of his destiny.

Recalling his knowledge of the woods and the outdoors he spent so much time in, he walked over to an area where the land sank in. *Perfect*, he thought to himself. He ran 500 feet back to his shed and grabbed a shovel. As he made his way back, he saw his mother through the kitchen window, sipping a drink and smoking her cigarette. He figured it was probably her third seeing as it was almost 6 o'clock. He knew she would be looking for him soon, so he took off his sneakers and tiptoed down the deck stairs.

All of a sudden, he heard the deck door open. His mother had walked out. He fell to the ground and laid on his stomach. Dominic was conscious of his body's movement. As he smelled the fall that was still in the leaves, he begged to hear her footsteps followed by the closing of the deck door.

"Come inside, Dominic. It's almost dinner time," his mother said. She walked back inside and returned to her whiskey bottle and glass. She lit another cigarette and watched the small television in the kitchen.

As soon as he heard the closing door, Dominic got back to his spot and began digging. His thin frame worked tirelessly until his arms became weak. Eventually, he declared himself finished and began disguising the hole with brush. When he was finished, he knew it was a matter of time before his mother would start calling.

"Dominic," she screamed, "Get in here if you want to live to see fourteen!" She heard no response. As the alcohol saturated her system, she grabbed her spatula and fur coat. *He's really going to regret this*, she thought to herself.

She began stumbling into the wooded area; the alcohol had taken its hold on her. Dominic could hear her walking on the dried leaves, coming closer and closer with each step. He sat down, hiding behind the oak tree watching her hunt. She was only feet away, but her drunkenness had overpowered her sight. He started thinking about what life would be like without her. *I will have the house all to myself*, he thought. Then, he felt a sudden jolt to his shoulder. He returned to reality.

She grabbed his shirt saying, "So you think you can fool me, huh? You don't think that's been done before? Why do you think the hole is there in the first place? Let's go." She brought his face inches from hers and stared at him, half-angry, half-drunk. Dominic could smell the alcohol on her breath and he turned away. She dragged him towards the house as she continued to stumble. She opened the patio door and pushed him inside. He wondered if he would even survive to think of Plan B.