Branches

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

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"Give it back to me!" she cried trying to reach the small, tattered toy in his hand.

"Now way," he laughed, teasing his sister, "you have to come and get it! Come on! Here it is . . ." He held the stuffed animal with floppy legs and black button eyes out to her, and just as she was about to latch on to it, he thrust it high in the air out of the reach of her six year old hands.

"Johnathan . . ." she cried, becoming exceedingly more frustrated over the authority that four inches and two more years on this Earth had granted him as a brother. It wasn't fair. Her sweet little Pony never did anything to him! *Just because he is the brother doesn’t give him the right to pick on defenseless animals. Poor Pony, just look at how sad and scared he is right now, she thought to herself. She had to rescue him!

"POOOOONNYYYYY!!" she screamed as Pony’s scruffy black tail and floppy legs went flip flopping through the air. With every one of Pony’s flights through the air Beth’s face became a little more flushed.

Just as Jonathan was about to give Pony another huge hurl into the atmosphere, Beth got one pudgy little hand on Pony. Jonathan shoved her to the ground and Pony was catapulted into the air. Pony slowly reached a peak, then his flight started to curve back towards the Earth. His descent was unbearably slow, taunting Beth’s mother-like concern for his well-being. With his legs sprawled pitifully through the air, his landing place seemed unsure.

Everything became deafeningly loud when Pony hit the first branch. As the soft bean bag flesh hit one branch and then the next, it seemed as though the entire world had stopped to focus on this little stuffed horse. Scratch after scratch, branch after branch, he tumbled. Finally, the great branches of the Old White Pine managed to grab hold of him, and he rested in her arms. Pony hung there for a moment in eternity and then just dropped, his little black eyes staring at nothing.

"YOU KILLED MY PONY!" Her voice broke the crashing silence. She started to scramble up the ominous tree to rescue Pony. Jonathan, two years wiser, grabbed her.

"You can’t climb that tree, you’re too little?" He told her. She stepped back, tears streaming down her red cheeks and stared at the tree. It’s rough old branches towered over her blond curls, and Pony, poor sweet Pony, stuck up there halfway to the sun. How ever
was she to get him out?

"Get him out! Get him out! GET HIM OUT!" she wailed, kicking and punching her brother.

"Okay, okay, stop hitting me!" he said, pushing her away. He stared up at the small pony. He knew she would tell if didn’t find a way to get Pony out of the tree.

"You got him stuck, you’ve got to get him out. You had better do it or I’m telling!" A panicky Beth threatened. Jonathan racked his brain for a solution and finally settled on one.

"We’ve got to go get a ladder. Follow me." Jonathan said with brotherly authority, not wanting to get in trouble.

When they got to the shed Jonathan pulled hard on the door, only to find that it was locked. Beth knew that the key was in the kitchen next to the phone...he would have to walk right by that make-up covered, gum chewing, frizzy-haired baby-sitter, Heather, to get it. She would be suspicious and she would surely come to investigate, and Jonathan would get in trouble for doing what he did to Pony.

"Go get the key!" Beth’s angry little voice demanded.

"I can’t..." Jonathan said knowing it was inevitable, she was going to tell.

"Why not?" Beth’s lower lip started to tremble, before he could give an excuse, she turned on her heel and ran to the house.

"Beth! No you can’t--" He caught up with her and tried to stop her, but she was on a mission. She didn’t care who she had to go to, she was going to get Pony out. She pushed open the back door, slamming it into the wall.

"Heather! Do you know what Jonathan --" she stuttered.

"Quiet!" Heather barked, "tell me during the commercial."

Heather was poised on the couch leaning intently toward the TV. Beth was really beginning to resent these soap show's.

"But Jonathan--" she tried again.

"I told you! After my soap!" Heather snapped, not taking her sight off the television. The anger showing in her dark eyes, Beth turned on her heel and marched outside to the tree. Jonathan followed close behind, quietly rejoicing that Heather didn’t listen, or seem to care.

"What are you doing?" Jonathan asked the determined Beth.

"Getting rocks, I’m going to knock Pony out of the tree."

After picking up some good size rocks she started throwing them at Pony. Sadly, none of her shots came close to the solemn black and brown toy. Panic returned. How was she going to get him out? She pushed the question out of her head and convinced herself that she
would get Pony out no matter what it took.

"Aren't you going to help me!" Beth yelled at Jonathan after a few more feeble attempts. While Jonathan's throws were stronger and more precise, they still weren't good enough to knock Pony out of the tree. Beth frustrated and tired, threw herself on the ground in an angry pout. With utter despair, she again stared up at the massive tree. Was Pony going to have to spend the night up there instead of in her arms? What if monsters came and scared him, or tried to eat him? What if he was stuck up there forever? Another cycle of tears started to stream down her face.

Suddenly, she heard something. Was that the garage door? Daddy was home! Beth sprang to her feet and ran to the garage, leaving Jonathan behind. Her father scooped her up into a hug, and through a fit full of wailing and tears, Beth managed to spit out the story. He chuckled at Pony's predicament and laughed at Beth's animated concern for the toy.

"Well, we are just going to have to fix things, aren't we?" He put her down and opened up the shed. He pulled out the huge silver ladder and propped it up against the tree. Beth just stared in awe while he climbed to the deathly height where Pony was. She didn't draw another breath until Pony was safely returned to her loving arms, and she knew that he would be with her that night.

--Kate McNamara