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Discovering My Most Valuable Possession

by

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A essay written as part of the Writing Programs

Academic Resource Center

Loyola Marymount University

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When my family exited the grand glass doors of the mall, my eyes were suddenly drawn to my left. A girl ten years old like me leaned against the wall of California Pizza Kitchen and gazed through the window at the feasting customers. She was a dark figure; filthy old clothes clung to her sweaty back and no shoes on her rough feet. Her ponytail was a mess and failed to keep her cool, and then it finally slipped undone. Her ponytail hair tie fell on the hot sidewalk behind a plant, and she struggled to look for it. I was shocked and pain burned in my heart, but not because of what I saw in that sad girl's wide eyes. I was hurt by the girl I envisioned who stomped around the Anchor Blue store not too long ago--myself. When I stared at her, guilt gnawed at my heart because I had been so selfish and greedy wanting more clothes. It took a heartbreaking appearance that made me realize how wrong my actions and attitude were, and they pierced my mind like a thorn. It made me realize that I was a totally different girl when we first arrived at the mall; selfish, greedy, and not content with what I truly had that was better than anything I could buy at the mall. I'll take you back to the beginning of my story.

The cool air refreshed my moist face when I entered the revolving doors of the mall. Mouthwatering aromas floated down from the food court upstairs. With my twenty dollar birthday money snug in my pocket I skipped excitedly in front of my parents. The light danced on the marble floors and reflected off the glistening jewelry in Icing. Chocolate delights were wrapped snugly in pretty boxes in See's. Adorable soft boots rested on shelves in Uggs. The vibrant colors of clothes the mannequins wore spilled into my eyes as I passed the display windows of Macy's, Anchor Blue, and Hollister. I was ten years old and I wanted everything!

"Nicolette," called my mom, "remember you can get *one* thing with *your* money so choose something special to you." She smiled warm-heartedly, but I stopped bouncing at her side. I winced at those words. *I don't want just one thing*, I thought. *There is so much to choose from*. I looked at my dad in hope that he would say something different, but all he said was, "Your mama is right honey, so have fun and get something you like." He smiled at me, too. They were happy to see me excited, but they did not know that I was put off by their words. *I just have to show how badly I want more than one thing and hopefully they'll give in, I'm sure*. I reassured myself and answered sweetly, "Ok!"

Immediately I was immersed in a wave of excitement and zipped from window to window. Finally, I entered Anchor Blue feeling like the luckiest girl ever. *These pants are just what I need; I love that shirt, it's so cute; I do need some more stud earrings; oh I love that*

scarf; maybe I should get a purse... Thoughts bounced in my head and I slung a couple of shirts, pants, and a few accessories over my right arm, along with bohemian flip flops hooked on my few free fingers. A lot of my girlfriends shopped here, and I couldn't wait to show off the adorable apparel of the popular store.

I made a little strut when I appeared at the dressing room doorway. The beachy light blue skinny jeans hugged my legs perfectly and the earthy red of the flip flops made the tan of my feet appear even darker. I especially adored the flowy cream colored blouse that lightly rested on my dark shoulders. I saw a gorgeous turquoise stone necklace displayed on a jewelry table and quickly added it to my amazing new look. I absolutely loved the outfit and had to own it. Nothing at home could surpass that look, and the clothes made me feel confident and attractive.

My parents sat on the waiting chairs and turned in my direction with wide eyes. "Ooh la la, those are very cute pants on you honey," commented my dad, as though that were the only new piece of clothing I had tried on. "Yes, I agree, Nico, and it's perfect you chose those because you could use a new pair huh?" chimed in my mom, as she too ignored the bright shirt and bohemian sandals I had on. "Thank you Mama and Papa -- they fit nicely! Do you also like this shirt? Oh! and the sandals? They are too cute right?" I said. "Mhmm, they are very nice on you sweetie, but remember how much money you have?" my dad inquired. To buy more time I cunningly responded, "Oh no I didn't forget, but I'm just saying how nice it all looks! And I still have to finish looking around; these aren't for certain yet." My mom said, "Okay, but don't take too long Nico. The outfit is very nice, but you don't need so many new clothes. Try to select *one* thing." She tilted her head and raised her eyebrows to emphasize that serious tone in her voice.

Back in the dressing room, I was irritated as I took a few more twirls and looked in the mirror. I felt as though nothing else had ever defined me better. I was breathless and ecstatic, but I grumbled at the thought that I could not bring that feeling with me to the outside world where I could flaunt it off to my friends. *It's not fair, why can't they let me get more things just this once? I hardly have any good clothes at home.* I knew I had clothes at home, and plenty that I didn't wear even though they were still nice and in good condition. I really did not need anything else, but I couldn't resist. What if I didn't get this opportunity again to finally shop at a nice popular store? One thing? How unfair.

I strolled out of the dressing room with my selections in both hands and approached my parents. "Please can I get at least the shirt and pants and possibly the sandals?" I didn't even give

them time to respond and commented, “I don’t have ones like these and I really want them. Please?!” “Nicolette please listen to us, you have several nice things at home you rarely wear, and this is a nice treat to let you decide how to use your own money,” my mom calmly explained. I looked at my dad with my chin pressed against my chest, and I scrunched my eyebrows above my frustrated glare. “But,” I began to protest. “Nicolette no! The pants or nothing then since you obviously fail to understand your mother and my wishes,” my dad’s tone vibrated deep in his chest, and I knew he was not going to allow me to even start debating.

Heat flustered in my cheeks and I stomped away angrily tossing the articles back where I got them. I was a tornado and left the clothes in disarray, but I did not care! *This is so unfair! I hate this!* I was so consumed in my anger that I did not realize how selfish I sounded.

Looking back, I am embarrassed by my actions and the way I treated my parents; how could I let material goods control my feelings and drive me to the point of hating my parents? In that moment, I felt I had every right to be upset and frustrated. I bought the pants, but the thrill of owning something new and of good quality disappeared. I wanted more.

I slumped and dragged my feet behind my parents as they hastened to leave the “place of temptations” I heard them call the mall at a voice level I could hear. The cool air of the mall had no effect on my simmering sleek cheeks; it felt as though I had been outside all along in the hot summer weather. Their irritation and waning patience radiated off their backs and that increased my rage. *They think they have every right to be mad at me and make me look like the bad person right now. They are the meanies who won’t let me have what I would like for once!*

The bag with the jeans kept hitting the side of my right leg as my limp arms flopped with agitation. At one point the bag entangled between my legs and I stumbled to catch my balance. I sensed a couple and their child glance over at me as I made a scene. *Great- I am like the picture perfect spoiled child grumbling and whining after her parents. They are looking at me thinking I am some little brat. Ugh!* I grunted, annoyed at the bag for making me look ridiculous. I shot a warning glare at them for even looking in my direction and carried on after my parents. We were almost at the exit, but it felt like forever to reach it.

I had pictured myself skipping the other way when we first arrived. How I wished it was that moment in time so that I could avoid that horrible end to my fun day. *If only I had been more patient and been more convincing!* But it was no use- the three of us still pursued the grand glass doors with the wonderful green EXIT sign above them. I felt like I had no control of myself

and was some little dog being tugged by its owner. My parents had the final word; they always controlled what I wanted and what I would get. It wasn't fair. I wanted to make my own decisions; after all it was *my* birthday money. *Why do they even have to care what I spend it on?* The last few seconds before we reached the exit ended, and I had no other chances to hold up my parents and convince them to give me a second chance or to give me more time to make a better choice.

Returning back to the image of the poor girl, suddenly I realized how ungrateful I was for my parents driving me to the mall. I was so unaware of their happiness to see me excited and so selfish in wanting everything I laid eyes on. *How could I have thought I needed more when this poor girl is in need of much more than clothes and a decent meal, but also a bath and someone to be with her? And to think that I thought clothes could define who I was! I don't need more new stuff to prove to my friends or anyone my worth. In fact, not a single object will ever do that for me!* My thoughts no longer bounced around; they sank slowly to my heart and pulled me down as though I were in quicksand.

I ran to my parents and gave them each a huge hug. I buried my face against their stomachs and begged them to forgive me. I suddenly had an idea and asked my parents to follow me back to Anchor Blue. This time I skipped out of the mall with a smaller pink bag and a See's chocolate lollipop. The girl had found her hair tie and wrapped her hair back up in a sorry mess again. "Hi... here you go," I smiled and held out my gift. She opened the bag to find a packet of rainbow hair ties and silver hair clips. Her grin was the brightest thing I had seen all day-- brighter than any item the light bounced off of in the mall. She was elated, nodded her head in thanks, and ran off with the candy snug in her pocket. She looked like she felt she was the luckiest girl ever! She looked like me when I skipped around with my birthday money snug in my pocket.

I turned back to look at my parents, and I smiled from ear to ear. "I knew you would choose something you liked," said my dad. My mom tilted her head again like before, but that time she winked at me. Right there and then, I knew I had the most valuable possession—my family. No one could ever put a price on them, and they had always brought, and forever will bring me supreme happiness.