

Dixie Foster

Ms. Honaker

English 101

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### Blown Out of Proportion

It was the final day of his thirty-day eviction notice. If he weren't out of the trailer by noon, my dad would have to go to the authorities. Marlow Hampton was out in the proper time frame, but my dad had an eerie feeling that things weren't quite over. "This is a dangerous man we are dealing with," he would say. My dad would soon find out just how "dangerous" the man really was.

Marlow was a man of small stature, but large ego. His skin was dark as that of an Indian and his eyes almost glowed green. I hardly ever saw Marlow without his white cowboy hat that hid his balding head. With him were his wife and three children. His wife Monica was, to be frank, a very obese and hideous woman. Her hair was always greased to her head, and the pores in her face were abnormally large, which was likely due to acne she might have had at a younger age. The youngest child was just an innocent baby. The middle one was a little boy around the age of six that resembled Marlow so much it was scary. And the oldest was a ten-year-old girl, who was extremely shy and seemed to be very uncomfortable around any human being.

Marlow and his family had been leasing my old childhood home, a trailer house about one mile from our current home, for only a few months when the trouble began.

The lease agreement was very specific and understandable. Both Marlow and my father agreed upon it. Included in this agreement were a list of various actions that could lead to eviction for Hampton and his family. These actions included falling enormously behind on

payments, not taking proper care of the property, and any illegal activity. Marlow, of course violated all three of these rules repeatedly. He refused to pay his debts, turned the place into a junkyard, and was caught stealing tools and various other items from my father. These violations, as stated in the agreement, finally lead to an eviction notice after a long period of tolerance and warning.

He made his anger and malice extremely apparent through warnings of “getting even” and the most famous threat, “I’ll ruin your life Jeff Foster!” which, of course, made my father uneasy about the situation. Frightened for my safety, my parents created a place for me to sleep in their room on that mysteriously dreadful thirtieth day. As we lay there in the bedroom watching T.V., BOOM!! The windows in the house shook as they would in an earthquake. The sound echoed in my ears louder than the largest firework display I had ever been to. My dad leaped from his bed and grabbed his gun assuming someone had kicked down the back door. He stealthily searched the house until he reached the rear entrance. He called to mom and me, “It’s okay, ya’ll! No one is in the house!” After a few seconds of silence, we heard my dad’s frantic voice, “Oh no! Get up and come here!” We ran to the back door and looked out into the darkness where we saw flames towering above the trees towards the direction of my childhood home Marlow Hampton had just moved out of.

My mother immediately yelled, “That son of a bitch blew it up!” We threw our shoes on and hustled out the door. She was correct, Marlow Hampton somehow turned our trailer into a ticking time bomb. As I stood in the middle of the highway, as a 12-year-old girl, I thought about what kind of person would do something so horrific. Thoughts were rushing through my head like horses in the Kentucky Derby. My memories of my old home were most prevalent. As I cried, I closed my eyes and visualized my old bedroom, Christmas mornings, Easter mornings,

and birthday parties. Seeing it all in flames broke my heart more than anything else ever had and probably ever will.

My neighbors that live over a mile away say they heard and felt the intense explosion. Parts of the trailer were found in about a 100-yard radius, including in the middle of the highway. After talking to a few people, and lots of speculation, we came to the conclusion that he left the stove blowing gas into the air as well as a candle burning somewhere in another room. Eventually the house completely filled with the gas and exploded. After about a month of investigation, Marlow was never convicted of arson due to the inability of the police and fire department to find evidence.

I suppose the surprise ending of my story would be the fact that Marlow Hampton is now in prison for maliciously cutting off a man's arm with a chainsaw. We had no idea what this man was capable of. Marlow definitely hurt me emotionally, but he also helped me. My experience with Marlow caused me to open my eyes and see the world for what it is. As dad tells me quite often, "You have to handle people with gloves on, Dixie." Therefore, in my everyday dealings with people, especially at work, I try to keep my distance. I try not to get involved with the latest drama because I have seen where "drama" can lead. None of the conflict between my family and the Hampton family had to take place, but Marlow literally blew everything out of proportion.