LETTERS ABOUT LITERATURE

MASSACHUSETTS LEVEL III HONORABLE MENTION 2009

Dear Mr. Capote,

My mother is not a bad person. She may drink until she passes out. She may get high. She may even put being in love over the care and protection of her own children, but she is not a bad person. While reading your novel *Breakfast at Tiffany's*, Holly made me see that.

For years I have been in the custody of my older sister, and I resented my mother for it. I hated her. I hated her for not taking care of me the way I had seen other mothers nurture their children. I hated her for being too wrapped up in her own world to care. I hated her especially for the many various spouses she brought in and out of our home (if you could call it a home), each one of them coming and going just as quickly as the one before. Stability and my mother were not close friends, though that was the one thing that I craved.

I see now that in ways my mother is Holly. Her promiscuity, her lack inhibitions and morals, and her secretive past all resembled that of my mother's, and I hated Holly for that. Still unwilling to face my mother's "betrayal" after all these years, I was forced to see her, to hear her, to remember her, and it frightened me. It frightened me to the point where I could no longer take thinking of her, and I wanted desperately to quit the book. I would take the bad grade; anything to keep my mind off my mother. Just as I was about to quit reading, as I had indeed quit on my mother, I caught a glimpse of something in Holly, something that was also in my mother and even in myself; the need to love and be loved. This glimpse, this tiny inkling that something true and real and good about my mother could exist and the desire to understand my mother's abandonment, kept me going.

I realized that Holly, like my mother, just needed to be loved by a man for whatever reason and just love altogether. Though my mother was distant and convoluted in her own personal relationships, she cared for my sister and I the only ways she knew how. Holly was to her cat as my mother was to her children. Neither fully realized what they actually cared about until they threw it away and it was gone, too late to get it back.

I've also come to realize that like Holly, my mother is, was and forever will be a wild animal who no one can tame. I sometimes find myself wishing I had had Holly's advice "don't try to love a wild animal" a long time ago. Loving them is a waste of time for they will leave and disappoint you in the end because that is all they know to do. Other times, I feel horrible for the way I had shunned her out of my life, now understanding her more through my insight from Holly's world.

Though I have not and probably will not ever fully forgive my mother for the inexplicable pain I have felt, I now understand her with considerably better reasoning. Thank you for allowing me to finally face my fear of coming in contact with my emotions for my mother. Though she does indeed have her faults, you have allowed me to be put into her shoes, and I can now wholeheartedly say that I do not hate my mother.

Sincerely,

Lindsey

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