

Fahimujjaman Towhid

Essay 1: My Photo Essay

English 1121 (Prof. Scanlan)

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## Life's Chapters: Discovering Meaning Through Experience

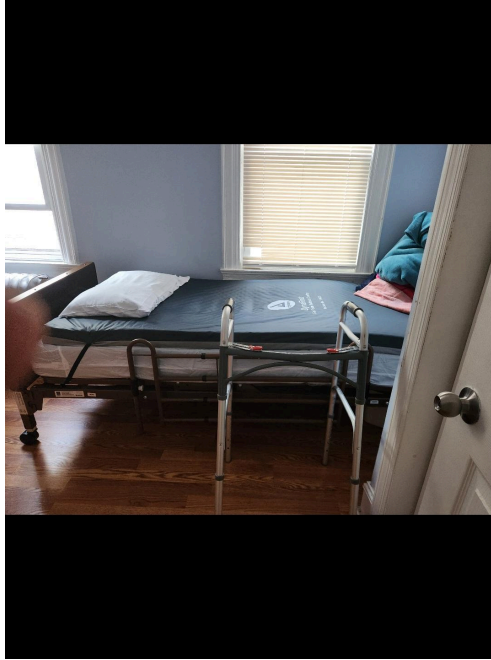
### “Finding Yourself in the Forest”



This was a two-day getaway with my best friends. I view the three of them as brothers. Now that college has started and our schedules are getting packed more than ever, we wanted to have this camping trip at the end of August as a way to end the summer. As young adults our phone screen time was accessively increasing, This trip provided a refreshing escape from the hustle of city life and the constant buzz of our cell phones, which allowed us to have the world in the palm of our hands. We were disconnected from the responsibilities the world brings. North

South Lake Campground was a beautiful adventure because of the remote location it provided us with. My campsite was right next to the lake, which was dangerous because brown bear activity was at its peak. I remember sleeping with a tactical light torch and a 9-inch knife in case I had to visit the bathroom late at night. The cool, crisp air, soft whispers of dawn, muted colors blending, and the first light breaking over the horizon woke me up before sunrise. I packed my sleeping bag up in the sedan, then I proceeded to drive off to the beach near my campsite. I was standing on the edge of the shore with my buddies; that's when we heard an M3 Comp engine approaching our sitting area. It turned out the gentleman inside that car wanted to make some morning continental breakfast on a grill right off the shore. He even invited us to join, but we had a busy schedule ahead. There was a one-hour hike on foot that we needed to take before noon, so we set out on this adventure of hiking—a winding path through fragrant pines, birds singing above, anticipation building. At the peak, water cascaded in shimmering brilliance, mist refreshing my skin. This was the decisive moment when I chose to take this picture and keep it in my heart for ages to come. Susan Sontag's "On Photography" has a line that is a narrative to tie all this up " the picture will still exist, conferring on the event a kind of immortality (and importance) it would never otherwise have enjoyed." (Page. 535).

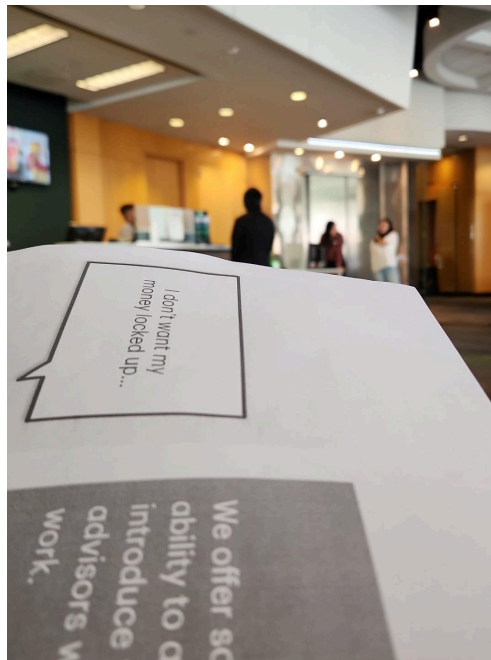
“ One call away “



On September 15th at 5 PM, I was outside my uncle's house on Hillside Avenue, Jamaica. I decided to travel for thirty minutes on the train to go to their house because I had to help them fix their CCTV cameras that had failed due to a software issue. I was in the process of buying bags of chips for my little cousins and orange juice for my maternal grandmother because I did not want to show up empty-handed to see them. Once I got to the door of their house, I realized the calling bell had been removed, and strangely enough, no one was picking up the call. I was surprised to see that, given that I could see my grandmother in her bed through her window. She cannot talk due to her health condition worsening because of age. I was frustrated at that moment because leaving her home alone seemed irresponsible. I walked away after no one picked up the call after twenty minutes of trying. The next day at noon, I got the call from my uncle informing me that my grandmother had passed away in the house. It felt as though the world had crashed down on me. The last time I saw my grandmother before this day was while she was being treated by the doctors in a nursing home for a brain stroke. That

day in the nursing home, I found her in a wheelchair alone in the cafeteria. As I walked up, she started looking at me to process who I was; after about one minute, she raised her right arm to call me closer to her. She asked how I knew where she would be, then she started sobbing while hugging my right arm. She told me about how she hated being away from us, and I promised her I would take her home quickly after the doctor permitted us to do so. We both chatted for a while; I was constantly wiping her tears from her cheeks. I looked around to see the nursing home cafeteria was quiet and dim. Sad, frail women sat alone, their eyes empty and lost. The air felt heavy, filled with unspoken sorrow and forgotten lives. Back in the present day, she is no longer with us. Her funeral was being held the next day. I am just standing here staring at her empty bed, capturing this Photograph of this moment.

#### “Robbery in Progress”



In “Understanding a Photograph” Berger J states “The degree to which I believe this is worth looking at can be judged by all that I am willingly not showing because it is contained in it.” This picture was taken during the quarterly review meeting at my job. In the photo above, two

of my new colleagues are volunteering to demonstrate what needs to be done if they are faced with a robber while doing customer transactions. As bankers, at the quarterly bank meeting, we review performance metrics, discuss loan portfolios, and analyze market trends. This lengthy, nerve-wracking session includes a soft check-in, akin to receiving a detailed verbal progress report. We set targets, address challenges, and strategize for the upcoming quarters, ensuring alignment and growth. During the meeting, we have moments of recognition for our hard work. I was proud to be named the second-best bank teller in our division for the last three quarters, with my best friend taking the top spot. This moment reminded me of when Teju Cole in "Perfect and Unrehearsed" wrote, "To make something by hand is to engage with time in a way that is increasingly rare." My best friend, who has been here a year longer than I have, taught me his tips when I first joined. Over time, I honed those skills and started to excel at persuading customers to sign up for our credit cards. As I got better, he noticed I was becoming a top seller, sparking a friendly rivalry between us. However, any praise can quickly fade, as we're evaluated as a team by the regional director. When quarterly reviews come around, it's all about working together and coordinating our efforts to do our best. I work at one of the busiest locations in the heart of Queens, which is known for its diverse group of customers, mostly South Asian. There are more than 15 gold stores within a five-minute walking radius of my branch, making it the ultimate money goblin. I can communicate well with all customers because of my ability to speak Bangla, Hindi, as well as English. Every day, I encounter some customers who are just fed up with their lives and want to vent all the anger they carry throughout the day when we have to tell them that there is a withdrawal limit due to the high cash withdrawals that day. This scales us back to the photo, where my colleagues confront the challenges of banking, reminding us that our work involves both numbers and navigating complex human emotions.

Citations -

Sontag, Susan. "On Photography." *OPEN LAB*, 1977,

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Berger, J. (2013). Understanding a Photograph. In G. Dyer (Ed.), *Understanding a Photograph* (pp. 17-21)

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