

**FULL** NAMES:

Hour:

**EVALUATE a FINAL Paper - SEE Related Sheet - Write on This Sheet – Topic: CRUSH**

Written By Michaela

The irritating texture of the coarse van seat rasped against my face as I drifted back into consciousness. (imagery) The sweet caress of music drifted through my brain and I remembered where I was, what was happening around me. All of a sudden the music ceased to buoy me as it had before. It no longer held at bay the memories, the regret...a heaviness settled upon me. I inhaled, and the scent of crushed and pixie sticks and sweat (along with a myriad of other things) invaded my senses. Yet strangely enough, I didn't want the ride to ever end.

I knew what would happen when it did. (Type of Intro: ACTION)

Earlier, we stopped at a gas station to fill up and let everyone stretch his/her cramped, cabin fever filled legs (imagery and flashback). Bud had bought himself a coffee (straight black, because apparently "that's the kind of guy he is") and didn't even start drinking it. He just stood warily outside the driver's-side door and laid his head on the seat. My heart went out to him in that moment. He looked so incredibly bone-tired...like he could just nod off and slip into hibernation like a polar bear. Polar Bear Bud, our youth leader. Soon after that, we all piled back into our transport module and Bud remarked,

"I just can't wait for this trip to be over."

At that comment, a fusion of white-hot indignation and deep blue sparkling hurt rushed through me. I had no right whatsoever to feel either of those things, of course. If

anyone, it was his wife and his children who should be glad because of this. Tell that to my heart, though.

Then someone said what I'd been feeling.

"I don't want it to end!" they challenged.

"When I was a kid, I never wanted the trip to end, either," he returned. I lifted my head from the way it had been turned, to the window with my feet on the stubborn gray seat and my knees tucked tight to my chin. A small, winsome smile spread onto my lips. I agreed. His words were small consolation, though. At the end of the day Bud would still be leaving, and I would still be torn inside. I would still be without my confidant...I would still be alone.

So I began to write. It felt like I was writing an epitaph or a suicide note, in that the right words to say just *wouldn't come*. They must have been left somewhere along the road of this ten-million-mile trip. Yet I was still there, needing them almost as much as I needed him not to go. Again and again I touched the tip of my black gel pen to the rough sheet of my sketchbook paper. Again and again the words morphed into something as bitter as a grapefruit, or more melodramatic than the worst student at high school. (metaphor) I sighed. Crumpling up the pathetic excuse for a piece of tree in my hands, I threw it into my glaringly bright pink purse (alliteration) as if that "thing" was the reason I had to go home, and stared out the window.

"I wish we could've stayed in Kentucky," I reflected silently to myself. We'd been there for National Youth Congress 2013, the largest gathering of apostolic young people on the continent, but something had been missing. I would find myself restless, or down, or not wanting to do anything by just lie in bed and sleep with my music. It just wasn't as fun as it should've been. Something was off.

My eyes found whatever it had been that was off; and let me know about it in no uncertain terms. Tears welled up beneath my lashes with the force of hurricane Katrina. They threatened to spill over and expose me to every living thing in that van.

I locked them down. They were illegal, a banned substance in any situation that involved other living human beings.

“No,” I whispered to myself. “Not here. Not now.” Blinking like a set of windshield wipers on overdrive, (simile) I forced the tears down.

My iPod nano took advantage of my momentary distraction to switch songs...and suddenly, my fingers knew what to do. Lightning bolts of inspiration (metaphor) had struck them in the form of a melody, “Remember Me,” and it was on. Feverishly, my pen flew, as if the very hounds of hell were chasing it. Words painted themselves on the paper and twined into each other. I was *writing*.

Faster and faster the world outside our little vehicle sped, blurring occasionally as the oceans in my eyes turned from low to high tide. Clearing, as I banished them again. The sun reached its zenith, and then it happened.

We were home.

The wheels ground to a halt and the interior of our vehicle became a churning mass of limbs and packs, bodies and blankets. Doors were wrenched open and people who’d drank a little too much cappuccino were sprinting for the bathrooms. The characteristically golden light of late afternoon streamed through the air, caressing everything in sight. For a split second, I marveled at it all. This, *this* was home.

“Alright, all of you!” called our leader, chuckling. “Not a single person is leaving until this van is so clean I could eat off of its floor.”

“They’d better get a move on, or they’ll be there all night,” I mused soundlessly. It looked like a bomb had gone off all over the rough gray seats and fuzzy flooring. The stool

that everyone always tripped over (it had been placed in the van for those who wouldn't be able to enter it otherwise) was lying haphazardly under a chair. Half-crushed Doritos and bits of Oreo shell littered the carpeting. Unable to stand just waiting there, off to the side, I jumped in. Many hands make light work, right?

I suppose a part of me was just reluctant to leave. My mother would be there soon, but I was hesitant to make it seem like I was ready to go.. My brain needed something to occupy it, as well; something other than the impending departure. This helped. Scouring the bottom for any fleck left over that the others missed, I discovered a gigantic pile of dust. Pixie dust. Calling for a broom and dustpan, I saw a glint of white out of the corner of my eye.

"Crap," I hissed to myself. "Why does she have to be here already"? I had called my mother when we were told to because I hadn't wanted to be the last one at church. I hadn't wanted to be the reason why, yet again, everyone was tired and missing their beds but couldn't go home, because there was still one person left. Mom was usually late, too, always late. This had gotten to be such a joke in our family that sometimes when we were supposed to go visit them, they would tell us to be there an hour earlier than lunch would actually start, so we could eat food that was still warm. (anecdote)

Of course she picked today to be on time. *Good form, Mom.* I kicked at the scuffed black pavement, disappointed, and peered up to see Bud meandering over to the car. "Great. Just great. Bloody fantastic, actually," I muttered. From this distance I couldn't quite stretch far enough to hear what they were saying...so with a grimace, I followed.

"So did she behave on the trip?" my mom queried with a grin. Her hair was graying and there were flyaways sticking out everywhere from underneath her bandanna.

“Oh, Mom. Really? Your poster child for ‘I Raised My Daughter with a sense of Public Decency’ could have possibly made trouble on this trip? Yeah. Totally. Just keep embarrassing me; go right ahead.”

“Yeah, she was good. A little quiet, but...” He grinned quirkily. I had been quiet?

“Gee, I wonder why.” Sarcasm tinged my thoughts. I tuned out for a moment in my irritation, but by the time I slid back into reality, Bud was striding away. Well, at least I would be able to have this slightly heart-rending conversation out of earshot of my mother. I plodded after him.

“Bud?” I called. He didn’t hear me, and it was hard to force my voice to say what my heart needed it to. “Bud?” I yelled out after him, a little louder. He pivoted around on a heel, eyes wild for a moment. He calmed down when he realized it was just me.

“I have to go,” I whispered, heart on my sleeve (as always). It was hard to read the emotion in his eyes. Did he care? Or was he just thinking about hugging the wife, kissing the kids? Then he stepped forward and hugged me....his arms were strong and I melted, just a little, because the fact that he was hugging me at all was abnormal. That was completely aside from the fact that I was trying to say goodbye.

I’ve never been good at goodbyes. My words are clumsy enough under normal circumstances, but now they were twining around each other like snakes. We broke apart. “Goodbye,” I declared, the tears coming back stronger now. They pushed at my eyelids, screaming, beating at me. I turned before he could see them and began to step away.

“I am proud of you,” Bud breathed. I could barely hear him through the anguish roaring in my ears. “...of all the things you’ve done.”

“Wow, my day is totally all better now!” I almost thought sarcastically back to him. I could barely muster the strength to take another step back to my ride.

“Of who you’ve become.” His voice sounded just the slightest bit choked up. It was almost enough to make me feel sorry for him. But the dying light around me and the car waiting just a few yards in front of me sealed up the rest of my heart. Steeling myself, I took another step in the direction I needed to go. Of course, he chose that moment to drop the bombshell.

“I love you,” he murmured. All of the breath went “whoosh”, right out of me. Air struggled to force its way into my silently screaming lungs.

It was then that I remembered the manilla note in my pocket. I turned, handed it to Bud, spun around, and sprinted to the car.

“Drive,” I commanded, a lone scion sliding down my cheek. (Type of Conc:  
Cliffhanger)