

Donald Vaughn

English 1010

Professor Catherine Randall

10 February 2016

Happy Meals

At four and three years old, when anyone asked me and my younger brother Brandy what we wanted to eat, it was always a very enthusiastically loud “happy meal.” The cheap prizes inside always distracted us from the reality of sleeping in an uncomfortable back seat, and the fact that our nineteen year old single mother struggled to provide us with this great luxury. One night, as we crouched together in the backseat watching momma sob through the rear view mirror, a policeman approached the window.

“What's the matter,” he asked momma.

She could barely make out the words as she cried in pain.

“I can no longer take care of these boys. They are hungry, and I have no way to feed them” she replied.

We followed the officer to the station where we received happy meals to eat. As we lay on the cold tile floor of the station, I could hear the adults talking about a place called *orphanage*.

Early one morning during our second year of orphanage our house parent came in screaming at us to get up. Momma was coming to visit! The first thing I noticed was how pretty she was in her new white dress. The next thing I noticed were the two happy meals she was carrying. We spent the day crying, and when she left she promised she would come back to get us one day. I held on to that toy for I don't know how long. Another terrifying year went by before momma came again. This time we were actually going to this wonderful place where meals were happy. We had so much fun eating and playing. Momma was so happy to see us that she decided to take us shopping.

When we arrived at the clothing store, I was mesmerized by the smells of new clothes and shoes. As I danced through the store, it didn't take long for me to spot a wonderful black T-shirt with a Dukes of Hazzard decal on the front. It was love at first sight.

I shouted at momma, "Please let me have it."

"Calm down and try it on" she said, with a smile.

As I pulled my old torn shirt off her face changed from adoration to a look of furious anger. She grabbed me by the arm and jerked me back to the car, leaving behind the greatest piece of clothing ever made. Or so I remember.

As we arrived back at the orphanage, I don't think the car even stopped before she jumped out and stormed into the office screaming. I sat in the backseat with Brandy crying. She was hysterical when she came back, throwing the box of all we possessed into the car. I could not fully comprehend why she was so upset; after all the bruises were nothing unusual for me.

We drove through the night, leaving the Bluegrass State behind, as well as my innocence. As we neared our new city, the sunrise of a new dawn rose over the New Orleans skyline. Momma looked into the rear view mirror just as she had done four years earlier.

"What do you boys want to eat?" she asked.

What do you think we said? It was truly the happiest meal I ever ate.