***Some students have a background, identity, interest, or talent that is so meaningful they believe their application would be incomplete without it. If this sounds like you, then please share your story.***

Beep! The aroma of freshly microwaved pastry diffused across the kitchen. I felt my stomach growling with hunger, begging to be fed. I had only two scones from the day before, both of which I’d heated and placed on the dining table. I left them unattended while I searched for eating utensils and jam.

Upon returning to the table, I was stunned to see one of my scones half eaten. How can that be? There was no person in sight, and only one scone remaining. I was enraged.

I knew it was not my parents nor my sister, as I would have heard their distinct footsteps. I turned towards the three cats surrounding the table, all appearing equally as guilty: Lynx, Cleopatra, and Hazelnut. They had a history of repeated offenses of drinking water in mugs, taking bites of fallen crackers on the floor, or sniffing meals on the table.

Luckily, I had all the time in the world. Left with no food and too much boredom, I decided to investigate.

I supposed the most obvious approach was to examine traces of scone crumbs, a seemingly foolproof method for suspects who were unlikely to cover their tracks.

I began with Lynx. Despite being a gray tabby, his entire chest is white. The more I stared, the more it resembled an apron, as if it were a sign from the universe telling me he *was* the perpetrator. Though, with light strokes across his dense fur, there was nothing.

I moved on with Cleopatra. I realized crumbs could easily camouflage under her ginger coat. Knowing her eating habits of using her paws, I thoroughly brushed over it. Again, nothing.

The same thing occurred with Hazelnut, even though I had a harder time due to her inability to sit still.

I figured however, I could not clear any of their names so easily.

I carefully observed their every move. In an attempt to lure them, I shook the food container—a surely familiar sound. Lynx began to reach for the food bowl. Interesting, I thought. He is hungry! This could prove his innocence.

Meanwhile, Cleopatra and Hazelnut’s lack of interest in Lynx’s meal tells me that their stomachs had just been filled. Could it possibly be my scone?

As an elimination method, I decided to use my sense of smell. I expected a hint of pastry-like scent from either of them. Instead, they were both a combination of mint and fish from their perfume and kibble.

I sat back down on the chair, consuming a then-cold, untouched piece of scone. Its texture was perfectly soft. The butter taste was quite prominent and blended nicely with the jam filling.

A minute or two of silence passed before I heard gagging from across the table. It was Cleopatra, who had vomited the contents of her stomach. What a way to ruin my appetite.

I took a last bite, nonetheless, which unexpectedly became my point of realization. I said out loud, “The scone has dairy!”.

Between my experience working with a nutritionist, and extensive research in lactose digestion, I understood Cleopatra’s poor ability to digest lactose in dairy, a key ingredient in the buttery scone. The absence of lactase in her system meant she had to expel the food, leaving a mess on my recently mopped floors.

Her round, yellow eyes glared as she looked at me with a stare that spoke of guilt. As punishment, she was locked in her cage the rest of the night, away from her friends—now proven innocent.

Most importantly, I learned my lesson. From that moment on, I developed a preventative caution for the fear of cleaning up after more vomit. No food on the table has since been left uncovered.

Hi Calysta!

First off, I'd like to applaud your style of storytelling. It’s definitely engaging and witty! Unique as it is, I am not actually sure that this fits the first prompt, though. Instead of prompt #1, this story might be better suited to prompt #5: Discuss an accomplishment, **event**, or realization that sparked a period of personal growth and a new understanding of yourself or others.

Prompt 5 allows you to approach it in a more relaxed manner while showing your personality and creativity. The safe bet for prompt 1 is an essay that highlights the candidate's background or identity—something so meaningful that it tells the reader who this candidate is.

Since your essay is more lighthearted and offers a more comedic approach, rewriting some parts to fit the 5th prompt may be a good idea. Either way, you will need to readjust the second half of your essay to show more reflection and explain to the reader what this story tells us about you.

Since you’ve shown your traits as someone who is curious, inquisitive, and observant, you can then detail the nature of these positive characteristics. Have you always been curious? If so, dedicate adequate space and time to show **how** you grew.

For instance, there are two possible routes here:

1. You show how you’ve always been a curious child and how all of your skills and talent are clearly displayed when you successfully point out that Cleo ate your scones. Although the ending is funny, I feel it lacks depth. Instead, you can elaborate on how your investigative skills will come in handy in the future and how you’re planning to utilize them in other aspects, especially for your passion or goals.
2. Another way is to stick to your original intro and elaborate more on "what is unique about you?" A good essay always needs an interesting character, a good story arc, and a good concluding point. Thus, during the investigation part, you can include how you were able to deduce and eliminate suspects due to your investigative skills (which you’ve developed constantly through research, helping your friends and families, etc). For the ending, you still need to show why your personality traits, methods of thinking, fields of interest, and practical skills form a *unique* combination. You need to be explicit in how you’re going to utilize this unique combination for your passions and dreams.

Best of luck!

Melinda