It was just like any other day.

Mom made pancakes and Dad was rustling through the morning paper. Only today it didn’t feel real. Dad was anxious, scared even. He just kept flipping and flipping through the paper...looking for something. For some article that could change our lives, end everything that we’d worked so hard to achieve.

Not even mom’s pancakes had the same taste. They were…salty.

I looked up to see Mom red-eyed staring down into the kitchen sink.

I couldn’t stomach the taste. I couldn’t even begin to feel the guilt.

You’d think that feeling sorry would count for something. But I can’t change what happened yesterday.

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I was in a hurry after staying up all night to finish the mountain of homework I’d been putting off. I…rushed to the bus without eating.

What was I thinking?!

I know how I get when I’m hungry. It’s like an all-consuming feeling. Not even sheer will can force me to snap out of it.

I don’t even remember half the day. But lunch, we had…no Jenn and Kris went ahead without me.

Brandon surprised me with a picnic. But I couldn’t concentrate. I couldn’t look at him. I was too hungry. A hunger that grapes and delicate cheeses couldn’t satisfy.

The next second I’m looking down.

I pounced.

I couldn’t not touch him…I mean he was right there!

I snapped. Feral, Dad called it. I knew after that day my life wouldn’t be the same. I was…dirty. Unclean.

Rangers assumed he was devoured by wild coyotes. The school didn’t find it the least suspicious that I disappeared for half the day.

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I have Mom to thank for that. She’s done nothing but protect me…and at the cost of sacrificing herself. Offer is the better word- and to Mr. Mason behind the stadium no less.

I gulped. “Shit.” I forgot how salty they were.

“Mom, it’ll be okay…we’ll be okay.”

She didn’t answer. I knew I couldn’t keep doing this to my family.   
I couldn’t keep hurting them like this. The disappointment was too great this time.

That day I left for good. I’ll make it on my own. I’ll survive without jeopardizing my family. Without sacrificing my mom.