

# Youth Essay - 2<sup>nd</sup> Place

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## Seeds of Hopes and Dreams: The Story of Star

Today, I would like to talk to you about the Humane Society of Skagit Valley and the role it has on our community since 1974. Hundreds of animals have found their forever homes throughout the course of HSSV history. Just a dream of a seed has turned into a blossoming tree, forever growing. This is an example of a story of one of the many dogs rescued by the Humane Society of Skagit Valley, Star.

“Get out you stupid dog!” Yells a big two-legged thing as they throw a sharp bottle at me. I whimper as I limp away.

I only wanted some food, and that bacon they were cooking smelled better than ever, especially in winter. My ribs started showing through my thin white coat (now brown because of all the mud that had splashed up onto it because of the heavy rainfalls) about a moon ago. The past few days have become a blur of rejection and restless sleep. It's hard to sleep when you're hungry.

And around the corner, trying to avoid the two-legged things at all costs, I smell that amazing smell again. Bacon. Yummm. My hunger overwhelms my logic as I head to the smell. Honestly, I looked ridiculous sniffing down the whole block. I didn't even notice when I hit the leg of a young two-legged thing. They looked down at me, but not with utter disgust; with a mix of pity and hope. Then, they did something that has never been done before. She picked me up. I tried to run out of her arms but it just felt so good. To feel warm, to feel...loved?

The rain clears in my mind, The darkness no longer there. I saw light, I saw a future.

“What's your name, little guy?” They ask, looking around my neck. Probably for one of those choker things that I see some of those fluffed up snobs that call themselves dogs wear. Always sneering in my face, like I'm not the one attached to a binding thing. Jangling the shiny things on their chokers like it's some sort of right. Like having a...name? Yes name. Like having a name was a good thing. Well maybe it was? No, no it's not, that's what all my mother said. Those snobby dogs have a name, well were they snobby? A lot looked at me with pity? No, no I can't think like that. Mainly because I know I'll never be like them. Never be cared for like I

belong, this encounter was probably just a trick. Oh and to be honest, I don't have a name. Unless stupid dog or mutt counts as one.

"ALICE." A shriek cuts through the air. I see another two-legged thing carrying a cane running to Alice, to me. Their face is a mask of enragement. They quickly reached Alice-and threw me out of her arms onto the ground. Pain, red hot pain. The redness blurs my vision. Then black, in one eye. Yet still so much pain. The stick, I realized, she blinded me...like I was nothing.

"Mother no!" The little one yells. They move over to me, shielding me.

Another pair of footsteps, heavier, urgent.

A muffled voice, I could tell I was almost done.

15 moons, I had only lived for 15 moons.

A shadow peers over me.

Death...or savior?

Warm arms scoop me up.

And the world fades to black.

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I wake up in a warm lap. A hand resting on my head, comforting me. I peek open my big brown eyes, and to my surprise I wake up to find my paws white. Paws that were so recently almost black. What had happened?

"I see someone has decided to wake up." Said a purring voice. I looked over, a cat. As growl rises in my throat. I'm about to pounce at him when two strong hands pick me up then turn me around.

"Ooh hello little guy." Says a two-legged thing with bright green eyes and curly black hair. "Welcome to the Humane Society of Skagit Valley!" They said with a bright voice. But there was something off, I could hear that cat moving around...but I couldn't see it fully. I should have, I could before...My memories come flashing back. The little two-legged thing, the cane, my eye...the red, then black. Like roses burning on a cold winter night. But now...I've heard of this place. One of my friends, a lab mix named Silver, got taken in here once. When I saw him next he said it was one of the best experiences of his life. Feeling like he belonged, like he was loved. A feeling I had barely felt before. Of course he also had one of those chokers, or as she called them "collars." He talked about it as if it was the best, maybe...maybe it was. To belong to a family, no matter how strange.

Then the two-legged thing set me down on the warm chestnut floor. I scurried over to the smug cat, ready to attack and chase.

BONK

I see stars around me, this cat seems to be surrounded by a spell of some sorts. An invisible shield. I will get through. So, I did the very smart and distinguished thing, and ran at the cat again. Charging with all my might, I could feel the wind aro-

BONK

Arggg, what the heck is that shield thing! Is it something the two-legged things put up!? I will find a way to break it! Then, as I prepared to charge, a two-legged thing picked me up. A small one, quite a bit shorter than the one who was holding me before. Then...then they started hugging me. Then started twirling me around.

“Oh Daddy can we keep him! He’s sooooo cute!” Said the little two-legged thing. A chuckle came from ‘daddy’ as the little boy called him, daddy strode over to us. Their eyes were brown like mine, his hair dirty blonde. He took me out of the small one’s arms and held me up to his face, smiling. Which was weird because normally when people hold me up it’s to chuck me across the road. It’s not my fault that I was dirty, all I wanted was to be nice and warm. A feeling I hadn’t felt since I was 3 moons old and my mother kicked me out of my litter. That was the first time I truly felt alone.

“Well Lupo,” Daddy said to the little one. “If you're gonna adopt him you have to give the poor guy a name.”

Lupo basically skipped over to us and stared me in the face. I noticed then, one of his brown eyes was murky, unclear, compared to the other. I blinked just to make sure, to make sure that we were the same. Myopic I think that’s what it’s called. One eyed, now my life thanks to that mean two-legged thing with the cane. Though maybe it is for the better, every little challenge comes with a reward. Maybe...maybe this was mine. Like strawberries blossoming on a warm summer day, like a new beginning after a hard winter. A new seed.

“Star daddy. Because you're gonna be the Star in my life!” Lupo said with enthusiasm. Then took me from Daddy’s arms once more and hugged me like I was the most precious thing in the world.

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The next few hours were a bit of a blur, between all this stupid paperwork Daddy had to do and going on my first ever car ride. It’s so fun to stick your head out the window! To get all the amazing scents, from the amazing breeze of the sea, to the delicious scent of those big black and white things. Though there was one thing I’ll remember for the rest of my life. Getting my color, my name. Oh how I felt so good! Feeling like I belong, because I did belong, I belong to Lupo. Oh how fun it was to go on walks with Lupo, and to run towards Lupo when Lupo comes home from school.

Now, sitting on my couch, I realize how great my life is. All because of the Humane Society of Skagit Valley. Once just a seed, an idea. Then grew and grew with donations and needs. And now there is a blossom tree, and I am one of those blossoms.

This is my story. The Story of Star.