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English 1110.01, MWF 1:30 – 2:25

Instructor: Cathy Ryan

Assignment: Character Sketch

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### The Officer

At night, before work he would always take around an hour to tend to his uniform. He would take time shining his boots with cotton balls and black polish while showing me proper techniques. He would show me how to iron pleats in his pant legs and shirt sleeves that made his uniform look sharp to touch. He would take a ruler and measure out his name tag and badges that were pinned on precisely. He would lay out his duty belt and clean every inch of it until the dark leather shined against his flat navy uniform. The last thing he did was to always take apart and clean his weapon. Of course I would never be aloud in the room for this part but I would always sneak my head around the corner to watch him. He was a man of pride and always took care of his things.

His face was stone cold. He had been on the police force for nearly 25 years and was nearing retirement. He had seen a lot, working the midnight shifts in a crime ridden part of town. He left for work at night with a courageous spirit ready to face any danger and returned in the morning with heavy bags under his eyes. He would walk in the house on Saturday mornings around 8am as I was be eating cereal and watching cartoons. As a child, excited to see him, I would run out of my chair and give him a hug and ask if he caught any “bad guys”. He always replied “of course” as he went down to the basement to take care of his neatly pressed uniform. I followed him downstairs like a puppy following his owner. I would always ask a million

questions about what he did and how many “bad guys” he caught. However, he would only give me vague answers. Looking back on it now, he wasn’t annoyed with my questions; he was only trying to protect my innocence from the outside world by not telling me what he actually did.

Every once in awhile he would bring the police car home and let me sit in the driver’s seat. I was allowed to play with the sirens, but only for a few seconds because we would annoy our neighbors. I always wanted to sit in the backseat and act like I was one of the “bad guys”, but he never let me. I loved seeing the police car in our driveway, it made me proud, even as a little kid.

My parents had been divorced since I was a child. I’ve grown up this way and it’s what I was used to. He would always drive down on the weekends and pick me up from home and then drive me all the way up to Akron. It was important to him that I was with him every weekend. He would listen to a variety of music in the car and would always talk to me along the way. Since it was a long drive I would usually fall asleep, but he didn’t mind. I knew he was tired too, but he never complained.

On the way back home on Sundays the drive seemed extra long. I think he might have driven slower on these days because he wanted to spend more time with me in the car. He didn’t talk as much as the when he first picked me up. I loved going up there on the weekends and spending time with him, but I know he enjoyed it more.