

The Duck and the Seagull

A Children's Story on Debate, Lies and Literary Integrity

474 words

Background Content:

The following piece is in response to James Frey controversial work; *A Million Pieces*, and deals with the issue of integrity in creative non-fiction writing. My piece is obviously a satire, exaggerating the idea of making a real story based on real facts. For me when reading Frey's novel and the controversy surrounding, it was as ridiculous as someone making a completely fake story. I think the final result of my argumentative dialogue demonstrates this fact.

Two ducks swim leisurely around a city pond, leaving the rest of the flock to bathe in the midday sun on the shore. The surrounding trees burst with fall foliage; leaves of red, orange and brown fall to the ground, with some landing on the pond's still surface. The pair swims up to the east bank of the pond where benches meet the sidewalk near a playground. An elderly gentleman tosses a few scraps of bread from what remains of his sandwich in the water, the ducks rush for the precious food.

"Mine!" Jimmy calls out, eagerly snatching two out of the three bread scraps.

"As usual," Larry mutters under his breath as he rolls his eyes. He stares longingly at the elderly gentleman, hoping that he would magically produce another sandwich.

"So I finished my book." Jimmy begins their weekly lap routine, paddling along the shoreline slowly. Larry falls into a steady motion beside him, swimming gracefully in the still water.

"Really? I didn't even know you were writing one," Larry's interest is peaked with this bit of news, a different pace from Jimmy's normal self-important ramblings.

"Yep. It's all done, my memoir." A smug grin engulfs Jimmy's face.

"What's it about? Your childhood or something?"

"Well it's about a seagull who..."

"A seagull?!" Larry interrupts, allowing his tail feathers to fluff in response.

"Yes." Jimmy answers matter-of-factly.

"But you're not a seagull."

"So what? It's about a bird."

"Okay go on..." Larry rolls his eyes.

"It's basically about his life, and the battles he has."

"What kind of battles?"

"Well in one chapter he almost gets hit by a cruise-liner." Jimmy uses his wings to demonstrate the immense size of the ship.

"What?" Larry stops swimming in disbelief.

"It's a boat that carries a bunch of people; they sleep, eat and dance aboard. There are also mystical creatures called "buffets" that really entrap the passengers."

"I know what a cruise-liner is" Larry remarks letting his voice rise, "but you've never even seen one." The pair's feet churn slowly in the water as they wade in place.

"Remember last fall when I almost got hit by that Buick on 3rd Ave?"

"Ya, I still can't believe you thought it was a good idea to cross the street towards an abandoned hot dog stand." Larry points to the hot dog stand across the street that has already gathered a lunch-time line.

"Well a cruise-liner and a car are practically the same thing, transportation for people."

"But one is in the ocean and the other....oh never mind," Larry allows his thought to diminish, knowing it's pointless to argue with Jimmy, "Okay, continue..."

"Anyway there are bunch of great tales like that, my adventures," Jimmy says proudly.

"But this is supposed to be a memoir right?" Larry starts back up the slow swim around the pond.

"My agent thinks it's the best route as far as marketing goes, I've already booked a spot on Oprah next week."

"For stories about a seagull?" Larry looks shocked.

"The sea can be a very dangerous place" Jimmy smiles devilishly.

"We live in a pond!" Larry yells. A few ducks on a nearby edge jump up quickly, startled by the noise only to glare at Larry and lay back to sleep.

"Well that wouldn't be a very interesting story would it?" Jimmy nods at one of the female ducks who glances his way.

"But it would be *your* story" Larry continues to grow more and more frustrated, his tail feathers fluffing out.

"This *is* my story, just embellished a bit." Jimmy remarks matter-of-factly.

"Fine then," Larry grumbles "maybe I'll just write my memoir next. It's about a peacock at the Central Park Zoo!" Larry swims rapidly towards the bank in frustration, leaving Jimmy floating by himself.

"Hey, do you have the rights on that? I'm looking to write a sequel!" Jimmy hollers out behind him.