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### My Family

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"HOW MANY TIMES HAVE I TOLD YEW that I don't have enough money to buy that damn batman lunchbox!" mom shouts as i continue to beg. My ninth birthday was two days ago. mom seems to have totally forgotten about it.

dad HAS BEEN GONE for almost a year now. mom says that he made too many jokes, like making her trip and fall. she would always have a black eye.

MY mother HITS THE TABLE. Grape juice flies into the air and onto the white, carpeted floor. i feel the cold sting of her hand slapping across my tender face. She begins to yell violently. "Why did you spill that juice --clean that up right now!" Out of fear, i quickly obey. She always gets real scary after she sniffs this baby powder stuff.

i CAN'T STAND HER. she doesn't love me. It doesn't matter. i have my own family now. It's called THE EAGLES. JOHN let me into THE EAGLES last week. No one at school messes with me now. Even though i am the youngest one, i can count on every single member of my "family"

to be there for me. They are my true brothers. i even have my own nickname, "Shorty".

"i CAN'T STAND THIS SHIT!" i exclaim as i walk out and slam the door. While walking to the end of my bustling city street i remember that my brothers are meeting in five minutes. i can't wait-- i mean, i take candy without paying for it all the time, but holding up a gas station for money? This is going to be great! i anxiously anticipate the power, the control, and the manipulation that i need! For once, I won't be taking orders from someone else. For once, I am independent. I feel good. i arrive at the meeting place. Everyone wants to know what happened to my face. i explain the story. JOHN says he'll talk to me later about it, but now it is time for my lesson in gas station hold up 101.

EVERYONE BEGINS TO LOOK AT ME as JOHN gives instructions, "You hold the gun like this, point it firmly at the guy behind the counter, and then demand for all the cash in his drawer. If he doesn't comply, shoot him." He shows me how to shoot it. The gunshot echoes off the buildings and goes unnoticed.

JOHN HANDS ME THE REVOLVER. The heavy, cold metal, frightens me. JOHN points across the street at the gas station. i'm nervous, but i have my entire family to back me up if something goes wrong. This will be easy. I march across the street and into the gas station. Holding up the gun, I ask for cash. "Please, don't shoot me! I'll do whatever you want!" the clerk exclaims as he fills my bag with money. It's

a piece of cake. I walk out of the gas station, and march proudly across the street toward my family. Everyone, including me, starts running for the secret hiding place.

AS WE ARRIVE AT THE DARK, SECRET ALLEY i excitedly hand over the gun and money to JOHN. He begins to count the money so that it can be split equally among all Eagles. JOHN finishes counting, and hands out several hundred dollars to each Eagle.

HE APPROACHES ME. "You need to kill that sorry excuse of a non-loving-drug- addicted-self-absorbed-mother! We've talked about it, and you need to do this for the family. You need to do this for you. No one hurts an Eagle! She must die!" My entire family nods. He places the revolver into my hand. "You know what you need to do."

NOW, AS I WALK HOME i know exactly what to do, and I'm not nervous this time. i will honor my family's wishes. i hide the gun in my jacket, and walk into my home. "I told you to clean up the damn juice!" my mom yells as her fist goes through my face. Blood streams down my face and onto the white, carpeted floor. i reach into my jacket and remove the gun. i hold it up, and aim at her head, just like in the gas station minutes before. For a second, there is a feeling that i can't pull the trigger. But the feeling quickly diminishes as she tells me what a worthless piece of shit i am. i pull the trigger and jump from the loud noise.

THEN A TEAR streams down my cheek and falls onto the white, carpeted floor. Right next to the juice, the blood, and my mom.

i SHUTTER as the cold, metal bars slam down loudly. I sit and think about the last two months I've spent in jail. the eagles don't care about what happens to me. In Jail, I've met so many new FRIENDS. They are my true FRIENDS. i even have my own nickname...