

From How to Get Into College

By Don Zolidis

SOLONGE, a high school senior whose seen hard times.
COLLEGE ADMISSIONS OFFICER JAMELLA

Solonge is a paid actor trying to come up with the most compelling personal story ever.

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Okay, so why do you think you'd like to go to this college, Lola?

Solonge looks off into space with a thousand-yard stare.

Lola?

SOLONGE

I seen my full of death. Times were hard on the farm. You never knew when the next rain was comin', or when up from the south would come a great cloud of locusts – I thought they were grasshoppers at first. I used to catch `em in my hands when I was a child.

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Right, but um –

SOLONGE

My grandpappy was the first one to go. His skin got paper-thin by the end. That's just how it is on the farm. Life and death in equal measure. I had a pet goat.

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I'm sorry to hear about -

SOLONGE

His name was Barry. Had one eye. Used to sit on my bed and night and eat my pajamas. That's just how it was. You wore pajamas, and sometimes a goat ate them. You didn't complain, because you knew your Momma was also dealing with a pet goat. She couldn't ever have no new dress. Cause of the goat.

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Why did you have the pet goats if they were eating your clothes?

SOLONGE

That's what you did! We didn't know no better. I used to ride out with my Daddy into the fields – we grew sorghum. It was beautiful. Sorghum as far as the eye could see. My Daddy said – this will be yours one day – if the bank don't take it from us.

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Did the bank take it?

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SOLONGE

They tried. Then they decided they didn't want it. Too many memories. Also goats.

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But -

SOLONGE

My Momma was beautiful. In the beginning. Before the locusts and the drought and the pet goats got to her. Life takes from you, just as much as it gives. Pretty soon you're digging a grave for the mailman in the dirt floor of your basement.

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Why were you digging a grave for the mailman?

SOLONGE

Cause he died. That's what you did. You chip in. You help.

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I'm just trying to wrap my mind about *why* –

SOLONGE

You didn't ask why on the farm. We didn't have time for why. Why is a luxury. We were hard folk. Simple folk. In the summers we'd catch fireflies in our bare hands and play leapfrog with the donkeys. The donkeys always won. That's how it was. No crying that the donkeys were cheating – nobody had time to listen to your whining. You skinned your knee, you kept going. You lost two fingers to a feral barncat, you didn't say nothing. You got hit in the face with a rusty nail thrown by a trained goat? You smiled and thought, 'that goat has got aim.'

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Okay, I'm trying to understand why the goats were there in the first place. They seem unpleasant.

SOLONGE

You have no idea. You with your little easy life. Free from goats. My Momma passed not long after my Grandpappy – carried away by the locusts. Her last words to me were: 'aaaah locusts. Also, go to college. Be better than this. You can do it. Even if your grades ain't that great and your SAT scores ain't nothing special. Go. Live your life. Far from here. Aaaaah locusts got me.'

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Wow.

SOLONGE

Wow. So I guess I'm here to honor her memory. Momma. Poor Momma.
Solonge has an emotional moment.

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Okay, so second question: What do you think you're going to major in?

SOLONGE

Pain.