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<u>When Nobody is Watching</u>

We have all had that moment where we are faced with a simple decision of doing what is *right* and doing what is *easy*. Like seeing someone struggle with an armful of boxes, trying to open a door. Do you do what is right and help them out or do you do what is easy and walk away and hope someone else eventually gives them a hand? In literature, what characters do in these minor -- or sometimes major -- situations tells us a great deal about their character. A major case of this situation takes place between Amir and Hassan in <u>The Kite Runner</u>. Amir's counter to being faced with this situation that can be considered a relatively easy decision to make, develops his character and leaves the readers with a strong opinion of what Amir is really like.

Amidst these situations, if a character decides to do what is easy, they can effortlessly walk away without any straightforward consequences; well of course maybe that vexatious conscious that leaves the characters eaten away by guilt. This is what happens to Amir when he abandons Hassan in that alley, just like the event that takes place in William Stafford's poem, "Traveling Through the Dark". This poem helps readers understand why characters are so often faced with these decisions: it is a character building technique.

Of course if the character so happens to decide to take the easy way out, that doesn't necessarily mean that they are a terrible, horrible person, no, not at all. Actually this decision gives us insight on how the character had been perhaps, brought up. It could simply have something to do with how their parents raised them, or maybe the people they hang around with. Hesitation can often tell us about this. The character *knows* what they're about to do is most likely the wrong way to handle the situation, but the fact that they ponder the idea of doing the right thing, tells us that there is a deeper reason to why they choose flight rather than fight. In Stafford's poem, we are given this example of hesitation, and knowing the character is about to do the wrong thing when it states, "I thought hard for us all" (Stafford 17). This compares to Amir's hesitation and contemplation, "I could stand up for Hassan … Or I could run. In the end I ran" (Hosseini 77). Amir had thought about all the times Hassan stood up for him though he still chose to ran, building his cowardice character.

The main character in Stafford's poem is faced with this difficult decision when he finds a pregnant deer, with the fawn still alive inside of her. He must decide to help the unborn fawn or to roll the dead deer, live baby still inside, off the cliff in order to save other drivers from swerving and causing an accident. This is all really about what characters reactions are to situations when nobody is watching. Just like the character in "Traveling Through the Dark", when Amir was left alone, nobody around and nobody watching him make the wrong decision, both of these characters take the easy way out, telling us that they aren't willing to go out of their way to help out other people when they know there will not be any obvious repercussions. All peer pressure disappears and tell us the decisions characters make completely on their own.

Within Stafford's poem, and Hosseini's novel, we are given scenarios where a character is faced with an extreme decisions that puts someone or something else in jeopardy, and we are able to look at the way characters react in this way and *why*. They must decide to either do what is *right* or what is *easy* and this is a way authors can develop character. These decisions can be made because of how a character is brought up, and if they are taught to be a hero or a coward (well, or if they're just plain awful). This teaches us to look deeper into why characters often choose the easy way out, rather than jumping to conclusions and thinking the characters are just simply horrible people.