

Shutterbug

Bella Beaumont

Click.

Although it was questionable, I had done it a hundred times before. It depicts their sadness, and yet their enjoyment. You could never fully understand. Their faces were different from ours. For one their ears were at the very top of their heads and fluff stood out from them.

Click.

I know it was just for a school project. Everyone was thinking about how to attract a reader with their fancy headings, special wording and...well, photography. We were told to bring our own. I did...

Click.

I suppose they have been through this for a long time. They don't turn away nor do they whine out loud and complain about the bright lights and loud shuttering. All I can do is show pictures and get told that I was just doing the same thing. I was. But no one listens without any visuals.

Click.

A small sniffle comes out from behind me.

...

My camera hangs from my neck as I turn to face the small animal. He seems quite comfortable in his mother's grey arms. It makes you think just how different we are. We eat, we sleep and we love.

Click.

From behind me students gather around to witness this display of life, careless to how sensitive our eyes are. But, instead the mother wraps her arm around the small child's eyes. One hand reaching for leaves and the other shielding a vulnerable creature from the deadly light.

Click.

No one dares to stop.

Click.

The mother still decides to ignore the continuous lights and slowly shifts over to the right, away from all the cameras.

...

"What is this? Oh come on! Turn around you stupid Koala! Do something interesting and wholesome!" A girl shouts from behind me.

...

Yet, the creature does not move. Instead her eyes turn back and gaze deeply into my own. I was one person against twenty. What was I to do? Nothing.

Click.

I scroll through the few photos I happened to catch. In each of them, the animals had either desired their freedom or had given up.

Click.

I had suspected at least one, *at least*, but none of them even looked happy. They didn't even try to hide the fact. They gave their signs. Filled food bowls. Lying around lazily. Yet no one recognised them. They snapped their photos and walked on.

Click.

“Alright class, it is time to move on, I'm sure the Koalas want their rest.” The teacher chuckles lightly.

Click.

Of course they want their rest. Each day children and adults alike come around and through strange bright lights into their eyes and expect them to be okay. I particularly did not enjoy the idea of being some kind of mannequin for another's attraction.

Click.

I may not be able to do anything about it now, but one day I will.

Click.

If you were to tell someone they were eating a pet dog or cat as a joke, they would yell, shout, complain. But what about the others? What about the chickens, pigs and cows?

Click.

They provide for us each day and yet we don't think twice about putting their skin into our mouths. I think. I eat but I still *think*.

Click.

Who decided that there were specific animals that we could eat and what we could not?

Click.

Who decided that we caged a few animals and then left the others alone?

Click.

I think about it. Day and night. But one day my thoughts will not be enough. I have lived with the taste of a carnivore for a long time. The plants taste horrible on my tongue. I am my own personal hypocrite.

Click.

But, one day I will change. Not for me. *For them*. Until then, I'm sorry.

...

As I look through my photos once more I face the Koala mother. Her body is limp and with slow breathing. And yet the smaller one still grips tightly onto her.

...

I would find a way to help. One at a time. If I could even get a singular article out, then this wouldn't be for nothing. *Just one.* Then one hundred. Then one thousand. Even if it took me a century I wouldn't stop until the message came across.

Click.

I would be proud if it were the last thing I ever did. If it were the only thing I ever did. As long as they gained their freedom once again. Nothing should be raised away from their real home.