Ineffective Writing Example:

The Night I Lost a Dog

I was probably 11-years-old or so when I was babysitting for a lady my mom worked with. The family had two children, a girl about four and a boy about two. I had babysat for them at this point several times and even though the little one was sometimes hard to put to bed, they were both great kids who loved to color and cuddle with me on the couch as we watched cartoons before bedtime.

One evening, I was taking their dog out to his dog-run. They didn’t have a fence in their backyard, nobody in the neighborhood did. And for some reason, the dog just decided to take off (I wasn’t holding him or anything). I turned to the little girl, told her to watch the boy, and took off running through everybody’s backyards in the direction the dog went. It was dark, I was scared I would be in trouble, and suddenly, I was in the bottom of a hole.

Somebody had dug a huge hole in their back yard for some reason. Maybe they were putting in a pool or a pond for fish. Regardless, I felt like it had swallowed me up, and with it, my shoulder ached in massive pain. I gave up on the dog, limped back home, and fortunately the kids were still outside waiting for me, the girl crying because I had left them. I don’t know what I was thinking doing that to them.

I called my mom, told her what happened, told her about my shoulder. All I could find in the house was baby aspirin, which didn’t do a thing to help the pain subside. When the parents got home, I told them what happened and apologized. What did they say? Ah, it happens all the time…don’t worry about it. I never babysat for them again.

Effective Writing Example:

**Running Scared**

               “Hello, Christy? This is Mrs. Smith. I was wondering if you could babysit for us on Saturday night? Mr. Smith and I want to go to a movie and would love it if you’d watch our two little ones. They do love you so much!”

                “Of course, Mrs. Smith.”

                “Perfect dear. We’ll pick you up at 7:00 and your mother can get you about 11:00. Is that okay?”

                “Yep!”

                Saturday night came rather quickly. The Smith’s picked me up like promised and I got right to work with the kids once they left. Sam was only a year and a half, and Rachel was nearly four, although she acted like a bossy mother. They were two of the sweetest kids I had ever watched. We would always sit together for dinner, Sam spitting his food out of his mouth, and Rachel yelling at him to eat his food. I would always giggle through it.

                After dinner, we’d all sit together and watch cartoons on the couch. Sam on one side, Rachel on the other, the three of us cuddling. As per routine, the dog, needed to go out about 9:30 to his dog run. The Smith's lived in a neighborhood that honored open space and no fenced-in backyards. This would soon prove to be the stupidest thing I had ever heard of.

"You want to help me take out Scooter to the potty?" I asked the kids. Both replied eagerly with quick shakes of the head. Hand-in-hand the three of us went to the back sliding-glass door to let Scooter out. He was a small black & brown terrier, with lots of energy but always gentle with the kids as they pulled and tugged on his ears. When I slid open the door, he took the first step out. As we crossed the threshold, he looked back up at me and I swear I saw him smile. Before I knew it, he exploded off the patio and into the darkness to the East. I was at a loss. The kids looked to me in wonder at where he went, and I panicked.

"Rachel, will you watch Sam while I go get Scooter? I'll be right back I promise. Here, hold his hand and do not let go no matter what, okay? I'llbeback. Justasecond juststayhere." And I was gone into the darkness as well.

As I ran through the darkness, sprinting and feeling my heart pounding in my chest ready to explode, I had no concern but finding the dog. I always worked hard throughout school and life to avoid conflict with others; I never liked to be in trouble. I was spanked once as a kid for something I did to deserve it, and never had it happen again. I was scared…scared of letting people down.

Roughly three minutes into the run that felt like an hour, yelling all along the way and probably waking every neighbor with my calls, I felt the earth disappear from beneath me. I heard my shoulder pop, a quick rush of pain, and I was lying face-first in a hole that nearly swallowed my whole body. I froze. *What the heck is this? Who has a hole in their back yard? Oh my God, my shoulder!!!!* When I finally found the strength to stand, I felt more pain rushing up my leg coming from my ankle. I looked around me, nothing but darkness; I couldn’t even see the hole I had just fallen in. I looked up at the night sky, the covered moon hiding from me, probably laughing at me, and decided to stumble to the house clutching my arm to my body and hobbling mostly on one leg.

When I returned, both kids were bawling in fear, crying out to me, wondering why I had left them. I didn’t care much, unfortunately; the pain was too strong. I called my mom as soon as I calmed the kids down and got inside. She just kind of laughed at me and told me to look for some aspirin. I did, but only found baby aspirin, which did nothing to ease my physical pain. My pride was destroyed and I was nervous to tell the parents what had happened. Of course I planned to leave out the part about abandoning their children for a dog.

When they got home, I confessed to their dog missing. And of course wouldn’t you know it, they told me it was fine and that it happened all the time. *Are you kidding me?*

That night as I fell asleep, I wondered why did I leave the kids who were so small and helpless? What if something had happened to them? Or if someone else had come running through the yard and seen them standing there alone, with the house open and unguarded? What if the parents had walked in while I was out running through everyone's yards? I vowed then that I would keep my cool better than I had that night. I wouldn’t let a dog running away put anyone else in danger. And I would never have a hole in my back yard.