

Hendrix, Carmen L.

My mind is still baffled by the thoughts of my mother and, to be honest, the thought of her asking to see me *specifically* is bothering me. The last time my mom said she wanted to see me, she really hurt me.

I remember the day vividly. It was the day after my brother died. Carrying around the memory of feeling the weight of Sam's body on mine as he protected me from the gunman still weighs heavily on me and it seems like my mother never understood, or cared, that I was traumatized by it. The guy that killed my brother had on some shoes that I will never forget, red sneakers with blue trim and the number 23 on them. They were shoes you didn't see often in my neighborhood. Imagine my surprise when my mother called me outside to see the face, and the shoes, that killed my brother. He was standing there, chatting with her and laughing as if he'd never done anything wrong and hadn't just killed someone the night before. How could she not know it was him? I told her about the shoes the night Sam died. I told her the red shoes killed Sam. Why would she stand there and talk to him? I stood frozen in the doorway for minutes before

Eight Moments

Excerpt

she even noticed I was there. She motioned for me to come outside, telling me that she wanted me to meet someone. My legs felt heavy with every step I took towards him, like I was walking in thick, muddy waters. Red Shoes stopped smiling when he saw me. It was like he'd seen a ghost.

“This is your daughter?” He asked my mom in a calm voice.

“Yes. It is.” She eyed him closely before she motioned for me to come over.

“That was your son that got killed at the store yesterday?”

“Yes, it was.” Her face saddened as she spoke to him and looked down at his shoes. She looked at me and said, “This is your cousin, Donna. Give him a hug.”

“Cousin?” I was puzzled. “This is our cousin,” I asked.

“Yes Donna.”

“But this is the...”

“Donna,” she cut me off before I could finish the sentence, “This is my cousin. I wanted you to meet him.

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He just moved here a few weeks ago. Run along now.” She pushed me towards the door and watched me as I gazed back at Sam’s killer. She never said his name. Once I made it inside, she turned to him and told him she was sad about losing Sam and told him her heart was broken. After a brief pause, I heard her say, “If I’d lost that one, I wouldn’t feel as bad.” She looked back towards the door I’d just entered, not knowing I was still there, listening through the screen. She snickered slightly and my heart sunk as tears fell from my eyes. How can a mother not care if she lost a child? I will never forget it. A few days later, at the funeral, Red Shoes was there to offer his condolences but my mother would not speak to him, nor would she allow him inside. My father seemed to know who he was and was baffled about why my mom didn’t want him there. “Isn’t that Ingrid’s boy?” he asked her. She shook her head as tears fell and told him to make sure he was gone and to never let him in the house. She reached over and hugged me as she whispered in my ear, “I should have let him kill you but I don’t want your father to have to bear the burden of losing two children.”

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I yanked away from her and slid closer to my daddy, knowing, at that very moment, that my mom tried to set me up when she called me to come outside.

I later found out that she'd anonymously turned my cousin in to the police for killing Sam. I couldn't sleep one night and got up to go to the kitchen for some water when I heard her talking to my father. She told him that there were few people she hated in this world and her cousin was one of them. "She was terrified when she saw him Gabe," she said to my father. "I knew he had done it and the look on her face was confirmation. He killed our boy Gabe. He killed him with no remorse and I want him to rot for it." The floor creaked as I moved towards them and she shot me an evil look, the same one she gave me when she previously told me that she wished I was dead.