

The Importance of Family

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The Importance of Family

by [WayLowHalo](#)

Summary

The first time Michael ever stole a car he was 10 and his kid brother needed to go to the doctor... this is that story.

Notes

Author's Note: Another old story from FanFiction(.Net). Part of my continuing effort to post everything in both places.

Feedback is not only welcomed but greatly encouraged!

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"Frank, your son is burning up, he needs to go to the doctor!" Madeline Westen yelled as her husband grabbed his keys and put his jacket on.

"So take him," Frank said irritably. "I'm going out."

"Well, I can't take him if you go out!" Madeline said shrilly, waving her cigarette around. "I need the car!"

"Quit your yelling, woman! I'm going out. The boy will be fine," Frank snapped, storming toward the door, only to be stopped by his eldest son. "Out of my way, boy," he snarled impatiently.

"Nate's sick," ten-year-old Michael said evenly. "We need the car."

"The little brat is fine, he's faking! Now I've already told you to get out of my way, I'm not going to say it again!" Frank yelled angrily, danger glinting in his eyes.

"We need..." Michael started, his voice getting quieter in contrast to his father's louder tone, but he was abruptly cut off as his father's fist shot out and collided with his face.

The next few seconds were a blur of confusion as Michael hit the floor, Madeline cried out, and, with a look of supreme satisfaction, Frank Westen walked out the door.

"Michael," Madeline gasped, bending down to her older son as the sound of the car revving up and driving away drifted through the open window.

Sitting up, blood streaked Michael's mouth and chin and he reached a hand up to wipe at it, his eyes glittering.

"God, Michael," Madeline gasped worriedly. "Why do you have to provoke him like that?"

"We need the car," Michael said simply, tenderly feeling his jaw, his expression hard.

"Mommy!" came a wail from elsewhere in the house, and Madeline, opening her mouth to respond to Michael hesitated, looking between her eldest, bleeding on the floor, to the stairs where Nate's sobs could be heard.

"Go to Nate," Michael told her quietly, solving her dilemma and Madeline hesitated only a moment before nodding and rushing up the stairs.

Slowly Michael got to his feet and stood there, staring out the window at the empty driveway for a few moments before nodding, apparently to himself, and walking purposefully out the door.

Upstairs in Nate's bedroom Madeline heard the door slam and her stomach jolted.

In her mind's eye she could see Michael... the way his eyes had hardened in his blood stained face...

Michael's eyes had looked like that before and almost against her will her mind took her back to a time when Michael was nine and Frank had apparently decided gambling was more important than feeding his family.

Michael had gotten that look in his eyes right before leaving then too and when he'd come back he'd had a black eye... and a week's worth of groceries.

She wondered what he'd bring back this time...

The thermometer beeped then and she held it up as Nate tossed feverishly. 104. Uncomfortably high.

Madeline sighed, Michael's face, grim and determined, flashing before her eyes again.

"Just a little longer, Nate," she murmured, trying to ignore the nervous clenching in her stomach.

Michael, she knew, would do what was necessary.

She could only hope he was careful...

Walking down the street Michael studied the cars in the driveways.

Nate needed to go to the doctor.

He had been up in Nate's room before their parents had started yelling and Nate, little face flushed, had leaned against him and asked in a weak, tired voice how long he had to be sick.

Now, jaw throbbing, Michael vowed it wouldn't be much longer if he had any say. If his father wouldn't take care of Nate than he would.

All he needed was a car. Just for a couple of hours, then he'd give it back.

Scotty, a kid at school, had shown him how to hot wire a car and it was surprisingly easy.

He just needed to find a car whose owner wouldn't notice its absence for a couple of hours.

That was all.

Just a couple of hours.

Just enough time to take Nate to the doctor and back.

Just a couple of hours.

Half an hour later Madeline Westen heard the front door open and close again from where she sat smoking in the kitchen.

Michael was back.

Cigarette in hand, she got up to meet him.

He was waiting for her by the door, leaning against it, his expression unreadable, traces of blood still lingering on his face.

For a moment they stared at each other.

"Let's take Nate to the doctor," Michael said finally, calmly.

"Your father has the car," Madeline said automatically, though she knew by now what Michael had done.

"I got us a car," Michael told her and she got the impression he wanted to get this over with and she took a puff of her cigarette, considering.

"You stole it?" she asked after a moment, and her voice was strangely calm.

"I'm going to return it after," Michael said and Madeline felt her first real flare of anger.

"You think that makes it right?" she snapped, and somewhere inside she felt pride that Michael didn't back down, that he had been willing to do this for his brother.

"Not *right*, no," Michael said, seeming to choose his words carefully. "Nate needs to go to the doctor. We needed a car so I got one. You're the one that always says family is what matters most."

Well, hell. He had her there.

Madeline resisted the urge to tell him how proud she was.

The kid couldn't go off thinking that grand theft auto was okay. On the other hand Nate was sick and they did need a car...

Madeline sighed. "This isn't over," she told her son, voice stern, and it wasn't all that hard to sound angry.

Theft was a bad thing and she didn't want Michael to think otherwise.

"Stealing is wrong and I expect you to return the car exactly as you found it!" she said, though she didn't really think Michael had anything else in mind.

"Of course," Michael said quickly, nodding, his eyes expectant.

Madeline sighed again. "Go get your brother," she said in defeat, because yes, she was going to use the car.

A few minutes later Michael met her outside, 5-year-old Nate, pajamas still on and looking half asleep, cradled in his arms.

As Michael strapped him into the back Madeline stared at the steering wheel. "There are no keys," she said finally, keeping her voice carefully blank.

Michael nodded, scrambling to the front to help and when his older brother left him, Nate, apparently more aware than Madeline had known, whimpered, one of his hands reaching out to try and keep Michael with him, his eyes filling with tears.

"I'll be right back, Nate," Michael murmured, leaning down under the dashboard, doing something that Madeline deliberately ignored.

"I don't want to know what you just did," she snapped when the car came to life and her son had straightened up and Michael actually grinned at her.

Cheeky little bastard.

In the back once more Michael put his seat belt on and allowed Nate, face tear streaked, to lean against him.

When she pulled out of the driveway though Nate moaned, clutching his stomach, his face faintly green.

"Easy, Nate," Michael murmured, shifting so he could wrap an arm around his little brother, keeping him from being jolted too much.

Sniffling, Nate buried his face in Michael's shoulder. "I feel yucky," he whispered.

"I know," Michael acknowledged quietly. "We're going to the doctor so you can get better."

Going to the doctor.

In the front Madeline let out a shaky breath as she finally allowed it to hit her. They were going to the doctor and Nate was going to be fine.

Michael had seen to that.

Watching her boys in the rearview mirror even as she kept an eye on the road Madeline smiled.

Somehow, she knew, Michael would always see to that.

-End.

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