

The Book – show its importance in your story.

*2019 Power of the Pen District Tournament
Best of Round and Best of the Best (Round 1)*

Mother and Daughter

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My hands grasp the library's cold handle. As always, I'm hit with the smell of books. Fresh cinnamon, late autumn leaves, and the winds sprinkling on the surface of the ocean all come together. Here, anything is possible.

"Hello, Mira." Mrs. M, the librarian, says. My name common on her lips from countless weekends spent between pages.

"Hi." I smile, making sure to wave as my pink bracelet rattles against my arm; showing off my new birthday present.

And then, I head towards the section. The one my legs always seem to naturally gravitate towards. Where the pages begin to thin and the bindings become merely threads. They may seem forgotten, lost for others, but for me, there's one book that stands out.

Its cover is blue, like the sky when ice cream runs down my arm on a hot day. But what really stands out, are the two faces gently smushed together. The smiles stretching across their faces as they look at each other with brightened eyes. Forever stained on the cover, a mother and her child. The child is always my age, so today she is seven. And the mother always has the red, swaying curls I remember tickling my face years ago, despite the black, straight hair on the cover.

The pages are worn from my fingertips ever since three years ago when a car had simply been at the wrong place at the wrong time. And then, she was simply gone. Her curls never again brushing against my cheeks.

Now, I've memorized every word on the pages of the picture book. Every phrase, smile, rhyme, and color are mine to keep. Mine to soak in on days when I want to know what could've been. The beaches we could have explored, the tears we could've shed, and the smiles we could've shared. All as mother and daughter.

But today, something is different. As I reach the dusty shelf that I usually clean off before breathing in the pages, the book is gone. My heart races, warmth reaching my cheeks as I frantically search for it.

"It's just misplaced." I whisper to myself between jagged breaths. "She can't leave me... not again..."

"Mira, are you okay?" Mrs. M slowly approaches me, her brows furrowed.

"The book.... The one I always read... it's..."

"I know, Mira, I know. I was meaning to tell you. Someone checked it out today. I'm sorry, but it'll come back." Mrs. M said, lowering herself to my blue, watery eyes.

"She said she'd come back too and she didn't. How do you know it will?" My words are heavy, mixed with my choking breaths.

“Mira, in the end, it’s just a book. And this, is just a library. In two weeks you can have it back in your hands.” Her voice is soft now, barely a whisper as she rests her hand on my shoulder.

“But... I want to see her.”

“I know, sweetie, I know.” She wraps me in a hug as I lay my head on her shoulder.

For a few seconds, we’re silent. Just me and her as her grey hair brushes against my cheek like the red curls from years ago.

“You know,” she begins, “a young girl, very much like you, came for the book. Very much like you.” She repeats as she slowly edges away, looking at me directly in the eyes.

“All books need to be shared, Mira. Some more than others.” And with a smile, she walks away.

I’m left on the floor, staring at the ceiling fan whirring across the hour.

I picture a girl, not much younger than me, finding the book with recently washed out eyes. The pages rich between her fingertips as she recounts days where her mother was by her side.

Maybe... maybe I could wait. For two weeks or two months. However long it takes to heal.

I could wait, if only to make one little girl smile.