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Professor Camp
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Exploring Silence: Portfolio Draft

Rarely will I not have anything to say, even when there's nothing to be said.

I get this from my Mom.

She is the most personable person I know.

The woman who raised me and my two brothers always has a lot to say, when it needs to be said.

She's outspoken, well-spoken, and chooses her words carefully.

She is a leader.

Someone you might take for granted, and recognize when they are gone.

A person you turn to when you are in trouble.

Or when you need to bend an ear.

She is also a felon, but more on that later.

I should mention that I have never known my real dad.

I remember meeting him once, after my grandfather passed away.

His father.

I was five or so.

I remember it was the first time I had ever worn a suit.

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The place I had spent every summer of my life.

We would gather pecans under the lumbering backyard shade trees.

My grandma was Scottish, and made sure I was, too.

Grandpa would wake me at dawn for our Sunday flea market trip.

My grandfather had been "Poppy" to me.

His wife had been my "Granny."

I remember that it wa

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Suddenly, he was there.

We were in the backyard, and pecans littered the ground around us.

They matched the brown of his hair, longer than you'd usually see.

I remember that I was glad I had worn my suit.

Afterward, he drove my two brothers and me to Radio Shack.

Let us each pick out a video game, and bought us a Nintendo.

I remember thinking he must be wealthy.

It is my first and last memory of him.

My mom remarried some time later.

I remember I was the ring bearer in the wedding.

It was the second time I wore a suit.

Her new husband was younger, just 19 at the time.

He worked construction, when there was work.

My mom, the accounts-payable manager for a large real estate firm.

The "Bread Winner."

She raised us in the hours between dinner and bedtime.

She taught me how to cook, how to do laundry, how to balance my checkbook.

To treat others as I would like to be treated.

He is important, though, my step-father.

He taught me about cars, music, and how to tell a joke.

He was a drinker, a drummer, and a fighter.

He played fast music and longed for a fast life.

He liked to spend money and complained

Sometimes he would fight with my mom and us boys.

If things escalated the police might

Either because my mom had taken us to stay somewhere.

Or because he left, either to jail, or to a bar to cool off.

But he is important, as I mentioned.

He eventually cleaned himself up.

She gave up our stability, so that he might start a future for us.

When his business was struggling and he needed money, she found it for him.

As a real- ,

So, she wrote some checks to my step- ,

A lot of checks.

Approximately \$750,000 worth of checks.

Enough to buy motorcycles and a race track, trucks and trailers, utilities and maintenance, labor and tools, and everything else one might need to start a successful business.

She did this for him, but also for our family.

She wanted him to succeed, to be the bread-winner, the head of our household.

She also embezzled close to a million dollars in the process.

Right around the time that I was graduating High School, my mom and step-dad went to prison.

I think I have experienced a good amount in life, despite a fairly vanilla existence.

I am your average American by most accounts.

I was raised and destined to be middle-class.

I enlisted in the military, like my real father, and his father.

I've made a career and a living for myself.

I vote.

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People tell me I am a natural leader.

I've never met a stranger.

And I always have something to say.

When I meet people, or start a new job, or give the obligatory first-day-of-class introduction, I tend to leave out a few details about my family and my formative years.

People ask about my parents, and I say that my mom is an amazing lady.

That she is the strongest woman I know.

I skip over the five golden years she spent at Chowchilla Women's Facility.

G G -father.

But these things are a part of me, just like my ability to cook Mexican food and fold laundry, or my tendencies towards fast cars and loud music.

My mom has great stories about prison, just ask her.

The people she met, the things she did to make the most of her time there.

How she got to be popular for her jailhouse burrito recipe.

Coincidentally meeting a high-school friend of mine on her first day inside, and how they became unconventional friends.

Doing the other inmates' hair, their black-market makeup operation.

Those are the stories she tells us, anyway.

The rest of my family talks openly about these early years, too.

Her trial, visiting her upstate.

The funds they raised for restitution to get her sentence reduced.

Pros and cons of the California criminal justice system.

I don't usually have a lot to add to these conversations.

I'd like to say something, but the words are hard to come by.

It's like that part of my life is not a part of Me.

As if the silence and I are at an impasse.

We notice each other, and I quietly step back.

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Certainly her having a criminal record lends me some kind of street cred.

I very well could flaunt it.