

Forgive...

"Go on Sammy, say you're sorry." Dad prompted my little brother softly.

"I'm vewwy, vewwy sorry Cara." I looked at him sharply, he was actually sorry!

"Cara, do you forgive him?" Dad turned to me with that familiar "do what I say" look.

Even though I wanted to, I couldn't, not yet. I was still angry. He'd only stolen a small toy, *and* he was sorry... but... I just... *couldn't*. Not yet...

I woke up, and as reality faded back slowly, hot, salty tears slid down my cheeks. This nightmare had haunted me every night since Sammy died six weeks ago. Saying "*died*" feels like putting it lightly. He was *murdered, brutally* murdered. The quarrel in that nightmare seems small, I know - and he had probably forgotten - but it was the only argument we didn't settle, the only wall still between us. He died on the other side of that wall. I couldn't forgive him, not yet, not ever. He was gone.

I had to be strong today, the murder trial was going to end, and I had to be mentally prepared for the verdict, the *guilty* verdict. I hated myself a lot for not forgiving Sammy, and I hated even more the one who stopped me having the chance to. I could never forgive the man who ruined my life by ending my brother's: I was angry, I would *always* be angry...

He was a *convicted murderer*. The convicted murderer of my brother. He would be sentenced in a week. I should have been glad: he would be punished, justice would be served. My hatred should have been satisfied; I should have found peace, but...

"Hate cannot drive out hate, only love can do that." I heard that quote from Martin Luther King Jr rattling round my head like a chant.

At first it didn't make sense. I couldn't tell what my conscience was trying to tell me. Soon, though, it *did* make sense. Giving this man my hate would multiply his own, but my love... my forgiveness... I would try it...

I ran to catch up as the convict left the courtroom. I reached him and began:

"'Hate cannot drive out hate, only love can do that.' I forgi..."

He didn't understand, so he turned and snarled at me.

"You can lecture me all day but it won't work. I'm *not* sorry. Give me a life sentence, I don't care. One day I'll escape and murder the rest of your family.

He wasn't sorry, he almost seemed *proud*. Proud of *murder*. Forgiveness seemed impossible, but Sammy would have managed it. "Not yet" wouldn't work, I had to finish this now. Forgiveness was hard - but forgiveness was *right*. Doing the right thing would honour Sammy's memory...

"I... I forgive you."