

Losing Auntie

By Angel Turner

Story Premise

Diane has always had a close relationship with her aunt, Carla. Three years after she marries an up and coming politician, Carla's husband commits her to a mental institution where her sanity

seems to dwindle at a rapid pace. The stories Diane hears from her uncle don't seem to reflect the Carla she knows. As Diane digs deeper in the past of her uncle and the mental institution where Carla now lives, she realizes to be sane or insane is what you make it and relative to who sees it.

Historical Background Information/ Timeline

Prior to this exact moment in time, several major events have taken place across the United States. Although they are on a large scale, within the state of Minnesota, those affect trickle down. This events essentially help shape the characters and drive their behaviors. The Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) was founded nearly 30 years before this story takes place. As time nears closer to the time frame of this story, the Civil Rights Movement started to pick up traction. In 1963, one of this nation's biggest movements, the 1963 March on Washington took place. In 1964, 3 CORE members were murdered by Ku Klux Klan members. Also, during this time, Roe V. Wade takes place. Since the main character of this story was brought up during this time, the effects of the law will shape her life directly and how she helps her aunt. During this time, funding for mental health increases. Experimental drugs are given and millions of dollars are being pumped into the mental health sector. Mental health awareness is being spread across the United States. Instead of all "criminals" receiving jail time for their crimes, those that are found to have mental illnesses or requiring additional mental health oversight are going into facilities that cater to this. Lastly, the expansion of railroads take place during this time. This increases revenue for states and reshapes the transportation world. All of these things have a direct correlation to politics and politicians which will have an effect on the characters in this story.

Main Character

Diane Barns is Caucasian Protestant woman who goes by the name, Princess, was born in Plymouth, Minnesota on March 5, 1960. During the story she is 19 years old.

Her nickname Princess was given to her by her dad. Her dad refers to himself as the king of the family. Since Diane is the only daughter she is the princess. Standing five feet three inches and weighing 115 pounds, she has a slender build. Her green eyes illuminate behind the glasses she wears, on the rare times she remembers to wear them. Her pale skin is complemented by small freckles that are splashed about her oval face. The distinctive mole above her left eye is shaped like a heart when Diane scrunches her forehead.

For the last 5 years, Diane has been a lover of tie-dye. Her unique style of fashion makes her stand out wherever she goes. She often switches her sandy brown hair between a high ponytail and low ponytail. She is never seen without her crown ring wedding finger that her dad gave her when she was 13. Her extremely neat and clean appearance makes her shine bright despite her paleness. She is a girly girl with a bit of a tom boy in her and speaks with a bit of a country draw. She thumps her chin when she is thinking and or pondering about something.

Diane grew in a close-knit family where gender roles are very evident. She has always been drawn to the notion of equality. She makes it her mission to stop injustice and help people she meets.

She is a lover of peace but isn't pulled into the hippie movement. Her parents want her to get married and have a traditional family. She wants that also but doesn't feel pressured to be a wife. She wants to see the world and make a change- a change for women and for people who are typically bullied.

She loves her family and finds herself torn between doing what her parents say is right and what she feels is right. She is mature for her age and doesn't fall for people's games- except for Dan's, the only person she allowed herself to be naively vulnerable to.

Supporting Characters

Aunt Carla- This story is based off Diane trying to save her aunt from the mental institution that her uncle places her in. From the time Diane was young, she has had a close relationship with her aunt and views her like a second mom. Carla is very fun and outgoing. She loves to sing and dance and is extremely fashionable. She waited late in life to have kids. She married an and coming politician but over time her life and personality began to change. She had an abortion following the implement of Roe V. Wade due to health issues. It took her through a state of depression but she soon got pregnant and had two children.

Uncle Ben- This character is married to Aunt Carla. He is money hungry but often tries to hide his motives and intent by engaging in national movements and charity type events. If the situation doesn't somehow benefit him he does not and will not concern himself with it. His whole reasoning for marrying Aunt Carla stemmed from a political move that he saw opportunity and money from. He is a tall, handsome man who speaks extremely well. He is not from the state of Minnesota but moved there from Boston. He is very territorial and as Diane later uncovers, he is not that man he portrayed himself to me.

Sandra Barns (mom)- Sandra is very sweet and pleasant. She loves her family and has helping nature. Diane gets her love for others from her mom. She is a 46-year-old homemaker. Diane resembles her mom. Throughout the story, Sandra is the voice of reason for her daughter. She does not like violence and often feels that her daughter has too much passion for certain situations. Her mom is very traditional and committed to her religion. She is modest and loves her baby sister Carla. She often takes the submissive role when conflict arises and this characteristic causes her and Diane to but heads.

Locations

1. Diane's home- The story starts out here. This is the house that literally builds the foundation of the story. This is where much of the story takes place. Many memories of Diane and her aunt are shared. This is also where Diane has many conversations with her parents, mainly her mother. Many of the conversations with her mom are more argumentative due to them opposing information about Diane's aunt, Carla. Diane has interactions with her two brothers and sometimes her two friends come by to hang out. Although this house is old, dated and not much to look at, it has all the comforts of a loving home and where Diane gains her momentum to find out the truth about what is going on.



2. Mental hospital- This is the second most visited place in the story. This place is not introduced until a bit later in the story. Here is where Diane's aunt, Carla spends majority of her time at in present time. Most of the memories regarding Aunt Carla are spent in other places, mainly Diane's home. The mental hospital is dark, eerie, and unwelcoming. It is over populated and understaffed. Diane visits this place almost daily to visit her aunt. As the story draws closer to the climax, Diane's visits her starts to decrease due to the staff and her uncle getting suspicious of her knowledge about the truth. They limit her time there and make various false reasons as to why the aunt is unavailable.



3. The bus- This is the third most frequented place in the story. Diane has to take the bus to visit her aunt. The ride is about 45 minutes one way. On the bus she does her in depth thinking and tries to connect the dots of what is truly going on. She can't do this at home due to time and the

people around her. Usually the bus is close to empty when she travels. Her first trips on the bus, she spent her time looking at the scenery. As the story nears the climax, she notices less of the scenery because she is so engulfed in the information she finds out. Normally, the bus has a fee, but Diane receives an open-ended bus pass from her uncle who works in the city.

Additional World Information

The additional world information that is important to explore is medicine. Medicine is paramount to this story. The main religion in this story is Protestant. There are many forms of medicine that will go against the Protestants beliefs. One, being the abortion, which although is a medical procedure. it is also considered a form of medicine. Medicine during this time drives the story and builds the climax. It is linked to money, power and position. There are other forms of medicine outside of people's mental problems that become questionable. The type of medicine that concerns Diane the most are the psychiatric drugs. During this time, there are a lot of experimental drugs and unfounded case studies that no one seems to know about until Diane begins to uncover them. Diane's family does not believe in taking medicine but her aunt does because she has long strayed from the faith. As things begin to look better for her aunt, she draws closer to the Protestant faith which not only makes a better and stronger person, but also makes her desire to fix things through medicine leave. Her husband does not care. Medicine is what makes him money and the only thing the politicians at this time seem to care about and invest their time promoting.

Story Synopsis

The story takes place in 1979. After being married for five years, Diane's aunt Carla, a mother of two is put into a mental institution by her husband Ben. Before marrying Ben, Carla lived with Diane and her family. This gave Carla time to build a close relationship with her Diane. Carla became like a second mom to Diane. Carla got pregnant and had an abortion due to medical issues- this was right after Roe V. Wade. She became depressed and was put on various medications to help stabilize her. Soon after, she met her husband who unknowingly to her, sought her out as a way to climb the political ladder. Due to the nature of her abortion, Carla became an advocate for Roe V. Wade. Although Carla wanted her privacy, Ben spoke on her behalf to help solidify his position in politics. Carla began to get better and soon got pregnant twice. During this time, she wanted privacy and did not want anything to do with the politics her husband was in or the medicine that she felt she no longer needed. The medicine however, kept her compliant and unaware of the evil doings her husband took part in. Ben took a weekend trip to Washington D.C. to handle some business but before leaving, he put extra medication in the coke his wife often drank. She became delirious and didn't properly look after her two small children. Ben used this opportunity to have his wife committed into a mental hospital and said she had been having issues since the abortion. He painted her out to be a really crazy person that he let go on to long without the proper care. Diane always felt that her uncle was hiding things from the family but could never put her finger on it. When her aunt gets committed, Diane begins to dig into her uncle's past, the mental hospital and the charity work her uncle is a part of. She soon realizes her aunt was just a pawn in her uncle's political scheme. The more she uncovers, the more she finds herself racing against the clock to help her aunt before it's too late. Diane must also protect herself, as this is not her uncle's first rodeo and his charming nature is more dangerous than anyone could have imagined.

Story Excerpt

Diane always hated coming to this place. The lack of love and care was apparent before entering the rusted gates that kept the mental hospital secluded from the rest of the world.

She inhaled a deep breath, clutched her bag and proceeded to rang the buzzer. She only had two hours left of visiting hours but she needed to see her aunt. Every time she left and came back, the Aunt Carla she remembered became more and more a distant memory.

“Yes, can I help you?” a loud voice echoed on a speaker half mounted on the gate.

“I’m here to see Carla Sanders,” Diane mumbled. That speaker always caught her off guard.

“Badge,” the voice screeched.

Diane fumbled in her purse for the thick plastic that granted her access on this side of the building. She secured it in between her fingers and quickly flashed it toward the gate.

“Step back,” said the voice.

Diane jumped out of the way of the gates. She knew at any moment they would swing open.

The loud rusted gate swung open and Diane skipped inside before they had the chance to close on her.

Once inside the hospital an eerie feeling seeped in the Diane’s bones. The dimly lit hallways didn’t help out the uneasy feeling. The patients all had a similar look- lifeless and not present. When she made it to the area her aunt was at her heart skipped a beat.

“Auntie!” she yelled.

Carla turned toward her but looked straight through her. This was something Diane would never get used to. It seemed every time Diane came to see her aunt, the aunt she remembered became more of a distant memory.

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