

Missing Michael

By Leo Cannon

NOTES

Michael Jackson is unquestionably the King of Pop. In his heartwarming first-person confessional, author Leo Cannon introduces us to two siblings, who share countless hours together listening to Michael Jackson's greatest hits and trying to emulate his world-renowned dance moves. This selection may be performed by either a male or female and may be entered in either Prose Interpretation or Dramatic Interpretation. Obviously, the subject matter alone builds an instant rapport with the audience, so don't cheat them by rushing the lines. Also, don't make the mistake of playing the overall dramatic tone at the beginning of the selection. As a performer, you never want to give away the ending too soon. If the performer is willing and/or is able to recreate any of Jackson's famous moves, it can only add to the overall nostalgia of the story. This is the story about the King of Pop, the secret bond between two siblings, and learning to deal with the loss of a loved one. If performed in Prose Interpretation, the drama mask icons are simply visible to show the performer when to turn the pages of the manuscript.

I was ten years old the day my mother left my father. My little brother, Michael, and I were watching a marathon of Michael Jackson videos in our bedroom. We were trying to tune out the crying, screaming and cursing coming from the kitchen. Michael and I were scared, but overall, it was just a normal night for us. We were used to our parents' bickering. As the older brother, I always tried to distract Michael from our parents' fighting. I didn't want him to be scared.



We were practicing our Michael Jackson moves. You know, my brother was only six at the time, but he could do the moon-walk as good as The King of Pop himself—Michael Jackson. My little brother would always claim that he's going to be a big star like Michael Jackson one day. After all, they shared the same first name. It was only a matter of time. I didn't doubt it. My brother was that good. I sat on the bed, while my brother was showing off his moon-walking skills. He would glide across the hard wood floors like he was floating on air. Then we would switch places, and I would practice my spin and pelvis thrust.



When Mom walked into our room that night, we both froze like we were caught doing something illegal. Then I noticed that our mom's face

looked like it was really sunburned. Still frozen in our awkward poses, Michael asked her what happened. Mom muttered something about Dad not liking the beans she made, and then she told us to go get in the car. Without questioning her, we followed Mom out of our bedroom, as ironically, the underscore of Michael Jackson's "Beat It" was blaring from the television. As we walked through the kitchen on our way to the garage, a pot of steaming hot beans decorated the floor. All too soon, it became perfectly clear what was happening. We were leaving—and most likely, we were never coming back. Across the room, Dad was sitting quietly on the couch. He looked at Michael and me with glassy eyes and said softly, "I'm sorry." That was the last time we ever saw or heard from our father again. After that night, whenever anyone asked Michael why we didn't have a dad, he'd always say it was because my mom didn't know how to cook beans.



Mom, without any college credits or previous work experience, somehow managed to land two jobs, and we moved into a tiny, one-bedroom rental house in the slums. The house was so old that I really believed it was built before Jesus was born. Mom gave us the bedroom, and she slept on the couch. This worked out great, since she was always at work most of the time anyway. While Mom was at work, I was in charge of babysitting Michael. I thought this was a huge compliment. It meant Mom trusted me to be the man, and I did my best not to disappoint her. At ten-years-old, it never occurred to me that I was babysitting simply because we couldn't afford a real babysitter.



One day at lunch, while we were eating my culinary specialty of slightly burned popcorn and a bowl of cream of mushroom soup, Michael and I were brain-storming. We were trying to figure out our next great business venture. We were always trying to think of ways to make money to help Mom out. We tried selling punch in front of our house, but it was so hot that we drank it all ourselves. One time, we picked flowers out of other people's flower beds, and then we went door-to-door selling them. When one of our customers realized we were selling her flowers out of her *own* yard, we had to shut the operation down. This day, however, we were eating and listening to the radio, and a Michael Jackson song came on. My brother immediately jumped up from the table and started dancing around, and I had a genius idea. We could put on our own dance show on our front porch and charge admission.



Michael was totally onboard, and immediately we went door-to-door invit-