

## Four Seconds too Late by Emily Dunkel

“WHAM”, I jumped up from sleep. Everything around me was dark, my eyes needed some time to get used to the darkness. Another sound, but this time coming out of our house. My father. I heard him running through our house with loud, hectic steps. I tapped through the door into the hallway and turned the lights on.

“What are you doing?! Turn the lights out again!” My father whispered, obviously very angry. Knowing, discussing wouldn’t make any sense, I shrugged my shoulders and turned out the light. I stood there with a grin on my face, because my father behaved like a scared-up squirrel.

I just wanted to go back to sleep when I heard him mutter some unclear sentence shreds. “...thrash.... shot at the border.... steal.... places of well-working citizen....need to be removed...riff-raff...dirty”

“CRACK”, another sound, louder this time. And my father who ran down the stairs like being haunted by the devil. “Dirty thrash.... stay away...not in my house”

I needed some time to think about those words until I slowly got a clear picture in my mind. “Dad, what are you doing?”, I asked him even though I could think of what he was going to do. But he didn’t answer. He ran through our house, stairs up, stairs down from the bathroom to the kitchen and back, avoiding to put the lights on.

I ran down the stairs to the kitchen where he was. And there he stood. Because of the moonlight shining brightly through the window, I was able to see that he had already found what he was searching for all the time. His gun.

He stared at me with empty eyes, saying I should go back to sleep, I wouldn’t understand the importance of what he was going to do. No, of course, I wouldn’t. Because in my view there was no need to do what he was going to do. I didn’t move, not a centimetre.

“BANG!” This was like a signal for my father. He grabbed his hands tighter around his gun and stormed out of the kitchen, pushing me against the table. The stabbing pain I directly felt in my knee stopped me from running behind him, stopped me from preventing this disaster. I crunched my teeth together and limped after him. I wasn’t fast enough. He already reached the front door and screamed through our neighbourhood that, no matter which dirty, illegal ni\*\*\*\* was on his property right now, he should run, run for his life. And then he fired.

I don’t remember much of this moment. I remember hearing a voice, a high-pitched voice, the moment my father fired his gun. I remember looking to the side, seeing luggage next to our front door. I remember a lipstick rolling towards us. A red lipstick. And I remember my father losing every sign of life that was once in his face, when he saw the lipstick in a pool of blood, coming from the person he shot.

Now, three years later I still own the lipstick and I like wearing it when someone visits me here. But I don’t think I will ever look as good as my Mum always did when wearing it.