

The Backstory of Miss Carmelita Spats

“Take those tights off right now, Carmelita. They aren’t classy,” Carmelita’s mother scolded, turning her nose up. Carmelita grunted and stomped her feet.

“These tights—” she tried.

“Don’t you talk back to me, Carmelita. Go change them.”

Carmelita squealed like an angry pig and began stomping back to her bedroom. She flung open the door and flopped onto her bed, screaming into her favorite pink pillow before throwing it across the room.

Carmelita Spats, although often throwing temper tantrums like a two-year-old, was nearly thirteen. She lived with her parents in Spats Manor, a place much too big for just three people. She loved her large bedroom, even though her mother absolutely despised it. Everything in the house was white, silver, or gray. The most boring color scheme anyone could come up with. That’s what Carmelita thought, anyway. She loved pink. Her walls were pink, her curtains were pink, her bed was pink, her rug...everything, if Carmelita could choose, would be pink. And not baby pink or a nice pastel pink, Carmelita preferred fuchsia, the brightest shade of pink you could find. She also loved to *wear* pink. That was what her mother hated the most.

Carmelita’s parents always had some party to go to, some gala, some fundraiser. And she had to go with them every time, for the reason her parents called a *learning experience*. The party she was going to tonight was special because it was for the recently elected state senator of New York, Rose Lyn. Carmelita personally thought that these types of events were quite boring—so she passed the time dreaming about performing for the guests. She secretly loved singing and dancing, but her parents believed little girls like Carmelita should be seen and not heard. For tonight’s event, she was wearing a frilly, white dress (she’d decided to spare herself a lecture by not wearing the one with pink trim and buttons), and striped pink-and-white tights. Apparently the tights were not ‘classy’ enough for her mother. Carmelita slowly pushed herself off of her king-sized bed, making her way to her large, walk-in closet, and studied what was inside. On one side, there were clothes in just three colors; white, silver, and *yellow*, a shade that Carmelita’s mother believed ‘enhanced her complexion.’ On the other side were Carmelita’s preferred items; pink tutus, stockings, dresses, shoes and other items that she had convinced her parents to buy for her. (She usually just had to throw a tantrum in public and her parents would do whatever it took to get her to stop...which included buying her all of the pink clothes she wanted.) Carmelita stomped out of her striped tights and threw them on the floor, knowing her maid, Giselle, would pick them up later. She looked through the ‘proper’ side of her closet, landing on some white stockings with ruffled ends.

As Carmelita walked out of her room, she nearly ran into Giselle. The maid was holding a duster and vacuum.

“Watch where you’re going, Giselle!” Carmelita rolled her eyes.

“Sorry, mademoiselle,” Giselle said, flustered. “I was just on my way to tidy up your bedroom.”

“Well, you can’t just run into me like that.”

“Oui,” Giselle replied.

“No, we’ve talked about this!” Carmelita scoffed. “When you speak to me, you say, ‘YES.’ Okay? Not wee.”

"My apologies, mademoiselle," Giselle sighed.

Without another word, Carmelita spun on her heel and strutted her way across the marble floors. She found her mother in the sun room.

"Mother?" Carmelita called from the doorway.

"Goodness, Carmelita, don't slouch like that."

Carmelita resisted the urge to roll her eyes. She straightened her back and took a deep breath.

"Much better outfit, darling." Her mother nodded.

"I'm going to the music room," Carmelita told her mother, turning around.

"Excuse me?" her mother practically cried, like Carmelita had just called her some horrid name. Carmelita swiveled back around, clearly annoyed.

"What?" she snapped. Her mother raised both eyebrows at her.

"Ugh! Fine!" Carmelita grunted. "May I go to the music room?!"

"Piano?" asked her mother.

"Yes, mother!" Carmelita rolled her eyes before her mother nodded, giving her permission to go.

Inside the music room, Carmelita buckled her tap shoes, walked over to the record player, and picked her favorite song to tap to; *The Marriage of Figaro* by W.A. Mozart. Making sure the doors were closed so her mother wouldn't hear her, Carmelita began to dance.

With the sun behind her, warming her like a spotlight, Carmelita felt free. No one was telling her what to do. She just let her feet fly, hitting the floor on the fast-paced beats of the song. The clicks of the metal on her shoes made her feel relaxed; yet lively. Carmelita closed her eyes and let her curly hair hit the sides of her face, the skirt of her dress flowing around her legs. Her arms went above her head and down at her sides, like wings. She was about to start singing when—

"CARMELITA DEIDRE SPATS!"

Carmelita screamed, so startled that she slipped and fell on her hip. Trying not to cry, she looked up and found her mother in the doorway. Her father was there, too, glaring at her from the shadows.

"What in the living Hell are you doing?!" her mother yelled. "You look utterly ridiculous!"

Carmelita screamed again, this time out of anger. She started to cry while pulling off her tap-shoes. The peppy Mozart music was still playing, causing a confusing atmosphere.

"Get *up*, Carmelita!" her mother scolded, walking over to her daughter. She snatched up both of Carmelita's shoes.

"No!" Carmelita yelled, and her tears came to a sudden stop. She wiped her nose and tried to reach for her shoes.

"Give those back!" she cried, pushing herself to her feet. Her hip was throbbing.

"Absolutely not, Carmelita. You know how I feel about that hideous dancing," her mother scoffed, handing the shoes to Carmelita's father. He took them, narrowed his eyes at Carmelita, then slipped away. Carmelita could only imagine what he was going to do with her shoes.

Carmelita's mother gripped her daughter's shoulders, pulling her close.

"You listen to me," she whispered. "You are never to do that—that—dancing. Ever. Again."

Carmelita, who was too flustered to talk back, nodded her head and whispered "okay," in the smallest voice she could muster.

“Now, go get some *proper* shoes on and clean up your face, it’s all red and swollen. Your father and I will be in the car.”

Carmelita angrily smudged her face with a wet rag at her bathroom sink. She couldn’t remember the last time she had been this mad. She didn’t want to think about what had just happened, but it was burning itself into the front of her thought cabinet. Carmelita threw her towel in the sink and stormed out of the bathroom to her shoe closet. She picked out a pair of black Mary Janes with a buckle and a small bow.

On Carmelita’s way out the front door, something caught her eye. On the large kitchen table were her tap shoes, bright pink and still intact. Carmelita knew if she left them there, her mother and father would come home and send them off to some charity, or, perhaps, thought Carmelita, destroy them entirely. So there was only one thing she could think to do. Carmelita snatched up the shoes and stuffed them under her fur coat.

The Spats had their own limousine, along with their hired driver. So, of course, all three Spats were forced to sit in the back—together. The car ride to the Senator’s mansion was long and awkward. Carmelita had the heels of her tap shoes sticking up her armpit and it was starting to hurt. Occasionally, her parents would give her a quick glare, but most of the ride they were staring silently straight ahead with their noses turned up. Her mother was dressed in a long, silky, black gown that had a deep purple bow around the waist. Her father wore a black suit with a purple tie. They both had their hair slicked back; her mother’s into a perfectly circular bun at the top of her head.

As they pulled into the driveway of the huge mansion, Carmelita’s mother grabbed her daughter’s arm and looked her right in the eyes, as if she were personally sticking daggers into each pupil.

“No funny business tonight,” she whispered. “Or there will be very, very serious consequences.”

“Yes, mother,” Carmelita muttered, eyes wide. She followed her mother out of the car.

After taking their coats and Carmelita’s tap-shoes (which she had quietly slipped to him under her jacket), the butler walked them to the ballroom.

Both of Carmelita’s parents transformed when they came to these kinds of events, but her father’s transformation was the most noticeable. His usually disengaged expression broke into a fake smile that reflected the diamond chandelier above him. But Carmelita didn’t believe it. It was the fakest thing she’d ever seen. Carmelita *lived* with her parents, and she knew what they were really like. Snobbish, lazy, and authentically so.

Amidst the guests dancing, gossiping, or drinking, a young boy caught Carmelita’s eye. He was wearing scrappy clothes that made him look very out of place, and he was awkwardly leaning over a table of fancy cakes. Carmelita, who had nothing better to do, decided to make her way over to him.

“What are you *doing*?” she asked the boy, and he turned to face her so fast, he almost knocked over the entire table of cakes.

“Whoops,” he smiled sheepishly. As soon as he saw Carmelita, his face flushed bright red.

“You’re very pretty, Miss,” he said, tipping his floppy cap in her direction.

“I know.” Carmelita rolled her eyes. “I’m adorable.”

“I don’t usually talk to pretty girls in such pretty dresses,” he said, scratching the back of his neck. He brought his face back to the cakes.

“Stop saying the word *pretty*,” Carmelita scoffed. “And what are you doing? It looks utterly ridiculous.”

“Oh,” said the boy, pulling his face away. “Well, my mother is one of the cooks, but she says I can’t have any cake because it’s for the guests. But I really, really like the smell of them...so sometimes I sniff them. I didn’t think anyone would notice.”

Carmelita thought about this for a moment.

“That’s hysterical,” she said, then clutched her stomach and started to laugh. “You’re a *cakesniffer!*” she cried. “Cakesniffer! Cakesniffer! Hahahahaha!” Carmelita chanted, but then stopped because she knew that if her mother heard her, she’d storm over to Carmelita and tell her to be more ladylike.

The boy hung his head. “You’re very pretty, Miss, but you’re not very nice.” He walked away into the crowd.

Carmelita rolled her eyes. Dinner wasn’t going to be served for a while and she was starting to get bored. Carmelita was sick and tired of these parties. The same old people in the same setting. She was tired of her controlling parents and the fact that all she could ever do was blend in. Carmelita knew it was time for a change. She raced over to the entrance of the ballroom, stopping when she reached the butler.

“I need different shoes and I believe you took them when I came in,” Carmelita snapped, raising her eyebrows.

“What do they look like?” He asked blankly.

“They’re pink and—”

“Ah, yes. I know which ones you’re talking about. Just one moment.”

He returned carrying her pink tap-shoes in one hand.

“Here you are, Miss.”

“Took you long enough.” Carmelita rolled her eyes. “Adorable girls like me shouldn’t have to wait for the things they want.” Without waiting for a reply, she snatched her shoes and made her way back into the ballroom.

Carmelita hid behind one very tall fruit and chocolate masterpiece and put on her tap shoes then ran to the front of the ballroom. She brought a champagne glass and a fork with her and started to sloppily slap the fork against the glass. A few people looked over at her, but nobody was really paying attention. Carmelita hit it even harder.

“Listen to me, you cakesniffers!” she yelled. And without even having to look, Carmelita saw her parents eyes in the crowd. They lit up like beacons, drilling into her soul. Immediately triggered, Carmelita did the unthinkable. The crash of the champagne glass on the ground was loud and frightening. Everyone stopped talking. Glass flew everywhere, causing the guests to gasp and step back, putting their hands in front of their faces.

“I said listen to me, you *CAKESNIFFERS!*” Carmelita screeched. She smiled when she saw everyone’s eyes on her and ignored the horror on their faces.

Carmelita centered herself and started to tap dance.

“Cakesniffers are all looking at meeeee, because I’m dancing and singiiiiing!” Carmelita sang, making the lyrics up on the spot.

“I’m adorable, I’m really cute, I’m an angel and my name! Is! Carmelitaaaaaaaaaaaaa!” She held the note out for as long as she could,

holding one arm above her head and one pointed at the ground with her fingers spread apart. Her parents pulled her out of the ballroom so fast, she didn't even get to see if anyone had applauded her.

Carmelita woke up the next morning with a stuffed nose and swollen eyes. Without having to rehash the night's events in her mind, she could practically still hear her parents whispering 'we'll talk about it in the morning.'

Even though she wanted to stay under her covers, Carmelita went to her closet and threw on a pink sweater dress, deciding that wearing pink wouldn't make a difference in her punishment. Carmelita knew it would already be the worst she could imagine.

She looked at herself in her bathroom mirror.

"How pathetic," Carmelita whispered to herself, touching her cheek. She rinsed her face off and brushed her hair, attempting to tame the curls. Carmelita wanted to start crying again. She wanted to be alone. She wanted a hug. But none of these were reasonable wishes. The only thing she could hope for now was to not die by the time her parents were done with her.

"Okay, let's get this over with!" Carmelita shouted as she flung open the door to her room. She walked into the sunroom and flopped onto the couch across from her parents.

It's a funny thing, when you know you're going to get in trouble. You sort of give up. It doesn't matter how you portray yourself. You just want to get it over with.

Carmelita was surprised by how calm both of her parents looked. She had been expecting a pair of exploding bombs, but her mother had her hands neatly folded in front of her and was staring intently at her daughter, while her father didn't even seem aware of what was happening. He just looked around the room.

"Well?" Carmelita slapped her palms on the table. "Aren't you going to say anything?" Her mother took a deep breath.

"We can't deal with you anymore, Carmelita."

Carmelita's eyebrows narrowed with confusion.

"But I suppose we can't just—give you up. That isn't...considerate. You just need to be fixed," said her mother, not meeting her daughter's eyes. Carmelita dropped her gaze.

"There's this wonderful boarding school," began her father, and Carmelita's head snapped up. Not because of what he's said, but simply the fact that her father hadn't spoken directly to her in—quite honestly—years.

"Yes," Carmelita's mother continued, "It's called Prufrock Preparatory. It has wonderful ratings. The residents get to stay in lovely rooms, and I've heard there are violin concerts quite often in the auditorium."

"Wait a second," Carmelita said, "A boarding school? As in where—where *orphans* go?" She whispered the last part as if she'd just said something awful.

"Now, Carmelita, this will be good for you." Her mother raised her eyebrows. "And...we will most likely come back for you. When you're ready."

But Carmelita knew that this meant when her *parents* were ready.

"Mother, you cannot send me to a boarding school! Do you have any idea how many *cakesniffers* go to boarding schools?!"

"What on earth is a cakesniffer?" her father whispered, shaking his head.

"I refuse! I will not be attending a boarding school!" Carmelita cried hopelessly.

The ride to Prufrock Prep was not a pleasant one. Carmelita leaned her head against the tinted window and told herself how adorable and talented she was. She would make everyone love her at this new school. There would be no speaking to orphans, except to make fun of them. Carmelita would make sure she got all of the gifts she wanted, including a new pair of tap shoes. Oh, and the violin performances? She would be dancing at each and every one of them. Maybe she could make this place her new home. She would just have to wait and see.

For those of you readers who care, Carmelita Spats did not lead a very pleasant life. She did make sure she received everything she wanted when she attended Prufrock Preparatory School, and she did make everyone give her their attention, and if it weren't for three children called the Baudelaire orphans, she probably would have stayed at the school. She would've grown up there, maybe even become happy at some point. But, instead, she got mixed up in some rather strange events with some rather strange people. Carmelita's story may not have a happy ending, with her perishing in a hotel fire, but it did have a few somewhat happy points. She ended up with one person who did truly love her, a very peculiar woman named Esmé Squalor. Though Carmelita's story is not ideal, it is one worth telling in the sense that she was a good person, deep, deep down in the depths of her heart. She just never had a chance to show it.

The End.