

SNEAK PEEK

A TEENAGER STABBED.
A TERRIFIED WITNESS.
A MOTHER'S NIGHTMARE.



SOMEONE ELSE'S SON

SAM HAYES

Sam Hayes is the author of four real-life fiction titles for Headline: *Blood Ties*, *Unspoken*, *Tell Tale* and *Someone Else's Son*. She takes ordinary families and puts them through immense emotional and psychological strain, making her novels uncomfortable yet compelling reads. Her emotional thrillers are perfect for fans of Sophie Hannah, Nicci French, Minette Walters, Susan Lewis, Belinda Bauer and Erin Kelly.

If you want to be challenged, terrified and exhilarated then her latest book **Someone Else's Son** delivers on all three accounts. As in her previous novels, the drama revolves around a moral question, in this case "Do we ever really know our children?"

'What would you do if your teenage son was stabbed to death at school?' That's a question chat-show host Carrie Kent can well imagine posing to any one of her studio guests. Her daily morning TV show deals with real life in all it's grubby glory - from underage sex to benefit swindlers, cheating partners to DNA testing. It's a million miles away from her perfect, polished existence. But when she gets a call to say that her beloved son Max has been murdered, Carrie and her ex-husband Brody will have to enter a world of poverty, fear and violence if they want to find out what really happened. And when the shocking truth is finally revealed, will they be able to live with it...?

Read on for an exclusive extract

Someone Else's Son is published in hardback on 14th October

Get your hands on a copy [here](#)

To find out more about Sam Hayes check out her website

www.samhayes.co.uk

FRIDAY, 24 APRIL 2009

Dayna's bare feet trod the worn carpet. She reluctantly slid her hand down the sticky banister rail. That cop had come back again. Her mother had barged straight into her room without knocking and dragged her by the arm on to the landing. 'Get down there and speak to him, whatever it is you've done.'

Dayna could smell her mother's hair – unwashed and smoky. It clumped in stringy bundles, grey at the roots, orange-brown at the uneven ends that hung around her exposed shoulders. She was wearing a mannish vest – wife-beaters, the girls at school called them, only in this case it was the other way round. Dayna thought it made her look like a scrawny bloke.

'I haven't done anything.' Dayna couldn't see properly because she'd been crying so much. No one understood. Was his body cold yet? she wondered. Had his insides trickled out? She'd read about decomposition when she'd skipped ahead in the biology textbook.

'Well, he seems to think you have. Go and tell him what he wants to know.'

Dayna reckoned it had only been an hour or so since his last visit; barely long enough to dry her eyes. She felt her mother's hand in the small of her back shoving her into the living room. She stared at her, praying for her to come in with her. She didn't. Wasn't it the law that you had to have a parent with you?

'Hello, Dayna. I thought I'd come back sooner rather than later to see how you're doing.'

The cop's voice was kind although Dayna knew it was fake. Why should he care about anything? There were two of them this time. Dayna's eyes flicked between them as they sat in the small front room – both of them men, neither in uniform.

'How do you think I'm doing? My best friend's dead.'

She sat down on the green velour sofa. They'd had it forever. Lorrell had weed on it, spilt milk on it, she'd been sick on it, food had been eaten on it, and her mother and Kev had shagged themselves stupid on it. Probably, if she thought about it, it was where Lorrell had been made.

'I want you to help me piece together everything you know about Max's life, Dayna. But first I need to clarify the events at school. It's important we don't waste any more time.'

How could a single morning in April span an entire universe?

'Do you think Max woke up this morning knowing he wouldn't get to see the evening?' Dayna got up and walked to the window, staring out of the grimy glass. It fogged from her breath. Grey cloud and drizzle shadowed everything. It was crazy. Worse than crazy.

'I—'

'Do you think he ate breakfast or do you think he thought there was no point? Or that it didn't matter if he never finished his coursework. Did he wonder that?'

'I don't think so, no.'

'What's your name?' Dayna swallowed. The shock of everything had made her forget.

'You can call me Dennis.'

Dennis the Menace, she thought. Max wouldn't have liked him.

'And this is Detective Inspector Marsh.'

A pause.

'What time did you get up this morning, Dayna?'

'The usual. About seven. Lorrell gets hungry.' She turned and

went back to the sofa, slumping down and resting her chin in her hand. What could she say? It all had to change now that Max had actually died. 'Yeah. Seven.' Her face ached from crying.

'And did you go straight into school at the normal time?'

'After I'd got Lorrell sorted, yes.' A sob hiccupped from her throat.

'Did you see Max first thing in school?'

Dayna thought. She glanced at the ceiling. 'No, I don't think so.'

'It's important.'

'Well, maybe. I can't remember. Can I see him?'

Dennis glanced at his colleague. 'Probably best to wait for the funeral,' Marsh said. 'There are tests and things that need to be done.' His voice was croaky.

'An autopsy?' She'd read about those.

Both detectives nodded.

'So when did you first see Max today?'

Dayna drew a sudden sharp breath. It took her by surprise. 'Erm, like he was . . .' She picked her fingernails. 'He was in maths, I think. Yeah, I saw him in maths.'

'What was after maths?'

'Geography then science. Max skipped them. I just did geography then went outside. It was break after science.'

'Did you go outside to look for Max?'

Dayna shrugged.

'It's important, Dayna.'

'Maybe. I dunno. What's it matter, anyway? He's dead, isn't he?' She knew she'd have to say it a thousand times at least before the raw edges healed, like picking a scab. Eventually it would be skin but slightly different.

'I'll ask you again. When you went outside after geography, were you looking for Max?'

'Yeah, I guess.'

‘Did you find him?’

‘Not right away.’ Dayna stood up again, unable to keep still. She paced to the window and leant on the sill. She stared out at the front garden. She’d tried to tidy it up after Lorrell got that glass in her foot. ‘I went and got chips. I was hungry.’

‘What time did you find him? It’s important, Dayna.’

‘Maybe about ten fifteen. Perhaps half past.’

‘But geography doesn’t finish until ten forty-five. I thought you said you were in geography.’

Dayna closed her eyes. Behind the blackness of her lids, the safest place she knew, she saw Max’s face. He was grinning at her and, beneath his trademark smile, she knew his body was doing the dance he did when he’d won something. The shimmy that made his legs look ten feet long. His *body*, she thought, flashing open her eyes, gripping the sill.

Then, in the brightness beyond, Dayna saw the river of blood flowing from Max’s hollow chest. Imprinted in her mind was the look on his face as he fell to the ground. She heard the whoops of the youths as they ran off, exhilarated, terrified; heard the ring of panic in her ears as she tried to save Max; heard the wail of the siren as the ambulance approached.

After that, not much was clear. She heard the pounding of her feet as she ran away; heard the breath of a stranger flying in and out of her lungs. Heard the sound of her own sobs as she realised what she’d done.

Carrie discharged herself. There was talk of concussion, sedation, monitoring until the initial shock had subsided . . . but how could anything compare to seeing your son’s body lying on a morgue slab, thinking that if you just touched his shoulder lightly, a little nudge, he’d twist on to his side, bleary-eyed, and groan that it wasn’t time to wake up yet, was it, Mum?

When no one would tell her what had happened to her