

Stacy picked up an old book. "Mom...."

Her mother was staring absently at an old lamp. "Where's Alex?" she asked.

Stacy shrugged.

"Did he disappear again?" Dad emerged from the darkness at the back of the shop, holding an ornate brass clock.

Stacy held up the book for him to see. "Dad, can I..."

A loud crash echoed from the darkness.

"Travis!" Dad turned away from her. "I told you not to touch anything." He hurried towards the sound as a small boy came running up to them, giggling.

"Mom, look at...." Stacy began

"Travis, don't sit on that!" Mom grabbed Travis by the arm and pulled him away from a pair of old chairs. "Can't you read the sign?"

Stacy put the book in her shoulder bag.

"Alex, come back, you're not supposed to go in there," Dad's voice echoed from the back of the store.

A sign was propped up on one of the chairs. 'Do not sit here! Very Dangerous!' it read. Dad chuckled. "I wonder what that means."

"I don't know, maybe we should take them home and find out," Mom said.

They turned toward the old woman behind the counter.

"How much for the chairs?" Dad asked.

The old woman caught Stacy's eye. She gave her a quick nod and a smile, then turned her attention back to Mom and Dad. Stacy felt a little shiver run up her spine.

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Stacy felt a chill of anticipation, sitting at the dinner table later that night, like something important was about to happen.

"What's missing?" Dad asked, looking around the table.

"No milk," Stacy said.

"Hmm." He stood up from his chair and walked into the kitchen. He grabbed the milk bottle that was sitting on the counter and turned towards the dining room.

"Watch out," Travis cried as Dad stumbled over him.

Dad sat down at the table. Travis climbed into the chair across from Stacy.

"Hon!" Dad shouted. "Come down for dinner!"

"Be right there!" Mom shouted down the stairs.

Travis looked down at his plate and grinned. He picked up his spoon, filled it with peas and aimed it at Stacy.

"Mom!" she called "Travis is..."

"Travis, put the spoon down!" Mom said as she sat down. "I think I've lost something, but I can't seem to remember...." She stared at the empty chair next to Travis.

Travis stuck his tongue out at Stacy. She glared at him.

Dad looked around at the dishes on the table. "Meat loaf, mashed potatoes, peas, milk..." Travis pointed at each dish as Dad recited the list. "That's everything, isn't it?" He looked around the table again, his eyes lingering on the empty chair.

Stacy left the table and walked toward the kitchen, and then turned and disappeared into the family room.

"Stacy, come back and eat dinner!" Dad shouted.

"Be right there," she yelled.

Travis had jumped down from his chair and was climbing up on the empty chair next to it.

"Travis, get off!" Mom and Dad shouted in terror. He slid to the ground, giggling, and climbed back onto his chair.

Stacy returned, holding a photo of Mom and Dad and three kids. "Who's that?" she asked pointing to a boy a few years older than Travis.

"I don't know, Stacy, will you please just sit down and eat?" Dad said.

Mom said, "You know, I think we could get rid of this table--it's a bit big for the three of us." She looked at the two empty chairs. "Maybe those chairs too."

"I don't know," Dad replied. "We just bought them. They remind me of something. I can't quite remember...."

Stacy held up a photo of Mom and Dad and two kids. "Who's that?" She asked pointing at the young boy in the photo.

"I don't know, Stacy." Dad pointed at her plate. "Sit. Eat."

Stacy sat down. "Maria's brother poured milk over her head in the cafeteria today. It was horrible. She was so mad. I'm glad I don't have any brothers."

Dad smiled and rubbed her head.

Stacy looked at the photo of her and her parents and smiled. "I like it this way, just the three of us."