

## The Empty Apartment

When Mark walked into the apartment on Green Street, it was empty, so empty he closed the front door again and opened it, thinking everything would reappear.

But when he opened it again, it was bare. The same three rooms that had contained furniture that morning now were, like enormous pockets turned inside out. He couldn't believe his mother would move out without telling him. He knew she was angry for his troubles with the police and being suspended for cutting school. They had argued about his staying out late, too. But she couldn't have been so angry she would just have packed up and taken off without telling him or letting him know where she had gone.

He looked in the bedroom, the kitchen, even the bathroom. He crisscrossed the hardwood floors, thinking that a note might have fallen, but there was no note. The vacant apartment was its own message.

He telephoned his mother's office. The secretary said she had taken a few days off to move.

"Where to?"

"Didn't she tell you?" the woman asked.

He was too ashamed to answer.

Later, he called his mother's friend..

"She wanted you to learn a lesson about taking her for granted," Zona said. She doesn't want to give up on you – but she wants you to know what it feels like to be without a home." Then Zona gave him the new address.

When he pressed the buzzer at the entrance, Mark felt like a stranger – a salesman calling on a customer, and not a son.

"Who's there?" his mother called through the intercom.

"Me, mom."

She buzzed him in.