

The Vacant Apartment

When he walked into the apartment on Green Street, it was empty, so empty he closed the front door again and opened it, thinking everything would be restored – and he had only imagined it empty.

But when he opened it again -- it was bare – the same three rooms that had been furnished that morning. He couldn't believe she would move out without telling him. He knew she was angry for his troubles with the police and for getting suspended from Galileo 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. But there was no note. He crisscrossed the hardwood floors, thinking it 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 and learned where she had moved.

"She wanted you to learn a lesson about taking her for granted," Zona said.

"Your mother isn't someone you can use and use. 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 she gave him the new address.

When he knocked on the door, he felt like a stranger – a salesman calling on a customer, and not a son.

'Who's there?' she called through the intercom.

"Me, mom."

She buzzed him in.

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