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The toy monkey

‘Mum, I’m not going into another shop!’ said Jeremy. ‘We’ve looked in gift shops, dress shops, shoe shops... We’re leaving this afternoon, and I want to take some photos of the sea lions at Fisherman’s Wharf. Come on, Mum. Let’s go, please!’

Jeremy Sinclair and his mother Jill were on holiday in America. It was their last day in San Francisco.

Jill liked shopping. She liked shopping a lot. She wanted to buy some gifts for family and friends. She also just loved dress shops and shoe shops. Jeremy didn’t.

They walked past another gift shop and Jill said, ‘Oh, look! This is nice.’ The shop was full of handmade things from Africa.

‘No, Mum! Don’t go in there, please!’ said Jeremy.

But Jill said, ‘I won’t be long. The sea lions can wait. You can too.’ And she walked into the African gift shop without him.

Jeremy waited on the footpath. Jill came to the door of the shop and said, ‘Jem, come in. There are some amazing things in this shop.’

Jeremy went in. The shop was full of colourful things to buy. There were lots of hats, clothes, cards, cups, pots and toys.

The shop assistant said to him, ‘Excuse me, sir. You need to give me your backpack, please. All big bags have to go behind the counter.’

Jeremy took off his backpack and gave it to the shop assistant. She put Jeremy’s backpack behind the counter. A

family of four people came into the shop. The shop assistant took their bags and put them behind the counter too.

‘Why don’t you find a gift for Ruby?’ Jill asked Jeremy.

‘No, Mum. I don’t want to.’

Ruby was his father’s daughter. Jeremy’s parents were divorced. His father lived in New York with his second wife, Tanya. Ruby was their baby. She was ten months old.

‘But Jem, she’s your little sister,’ said Jill. ‘And you’re going to meet her for the first time. Go on. Get a gift for Ruby.’

Jeremy didn’t like talking to his mother about Ruby. He didn’t like talking to her about his father. Not after the divorce.

‘Oh, look at this!’ said Jill. She picked up a toy monkey from the floor next to the counter. ‘It’s from Angola. It’s handmade. Isn’t it sweet?’

Jeremy didn’t speak.

‘You had a toy monkey when you were a baby,’ she said. ‘It was your special toy. Do you remember, Jem?’

‘Did I?’

‘Yes. His name was Bobo.’

‘Oh, yes, I remember Bobo!’ said Jeremy. ‘He had a red cap.’

‘That’s right. And you took him with you all the time.’

‘Yeah. I took him to the beach that summer. Remember that?’

‘You put Bobo into the water. Your father had to swim out and get him.’

‘I wanted to teach Bobo to swim!’

They both laughed. That was a very happy family holiday. It was before the divorce. Before Jeremy’s father moved to New York. Before Tanya and Ruby.



‘This monkey is a great gift for a baby girl. Come on, Jem. We’ll get it for Ruby. I’ll pay for it,’ Jill said. ‘I can’t see a price on it.’ She said to the shop assistant, ‘Excuse me.’

‘Can I help you?’ asked the shop assistant.

‘Yes, please. We want to buy this toy monkey. But it hasn’t got a price on it.’

‘Oh, doesn’t it? The small toy animals from Angola are twenty dollars.’

‘Thanks,’ said Jill. She gave the girl the money and then pointed behind the counter. ‘And those are our backpacks,’ she said.

The girl had to move some other bags to get them out. ‘There you are.’

‘Here, Jem,’ said Jill. ‘Put Ruby’s gift into your backpack.’

Jeremy shoved the toy monkey inside his backpack. Then they left the shop.

‘Now can we go to Fisherman’s Wharf?’ asked Jeremy.

‘Okay,’ said Jill. She took her tourist book out of her backpack and looked at the map. ‘We can go there in a cable car.’

They walked to the cable car stop. They didn’t have to wait very long. A cable car came noisily along the middle of the street. They got on. Jeremy stood outside and held on to a pole. The cable car started going up the hill.

The girl from the gift shop ran out onto the street. She was with a large man with blond hair.

The man said angrily, ‘You’re in big trouble! How did they get that monkey? It was behind the counter!’

The shop assistant cried, ‘I’m sorry, I’m sorry! I don’t know. I had to put a lot of bags behind the counter. Maybe I

moved the monkey then. You didn't tell me about it. I didn't know.'

She looked up the street. 'There! That boy on the cable car! He has the monkey. It's in his backpack.'

