

## The Wallet

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Daddy was happy. He had some real good days in the cab, lots better than usual, good tips from shoppers. He's taking off half of Friday to go shopping. And the best part—he's not going to drive on Christmas Day, he's going to spend it with us.

Friday before Christmas, Daddy is late. I think maybe he's getting a present for Mommy because Mommy is too old for Santa. I think Mommy thinks so too because she's not mad he's late. She likes him home by 6:30 so dinner is still a hot meal. When Daddy finally comes at 8:30, we know it's something bad. I never saw him look like that except when Marie got born and couldn't come home from the hospital for two weeks even after Mommy came home.

Daddy says he lost his wallet. All the money was in the wallet, not loose in his pocket like when it's just ones. He went to the bank and traded all the ones and fives for twenties and had all the bills flat in his wallet. Then he went to Fort Street to get Mommy's present. He was feeling so rich he took out his wallet and gave a dollar to a man playing ukelele in the street. That's the last time he remembers his wallet. He looked for it for two hours.

The tip money is gone, the pay money is gone, his license is gone. He has to get a new license or he can't drive the taxi. He says over and over how he takes out the wallet, gives the dollar, puts the wallet back in his pocket. Some pickpocket, he says. A pickpocket stole his wallet from his pocket. Just like how the pickpockets picked pockets in the movie Oliver.

Mommy goes and looks at Daddy's pocket. He has new pants and they're a little bit too tight, she can hardly pull the pocket away from the pants. She says, maybe it wasn't a pickpocket, maybe when Daddy went to put his wallet back in the tight pants, the pocket didn't open and the wallet just slipped to the ground, so it wasn't stolen. Daddy shouts, "What difference does that make? If somebody keeps my wallet, it's the same as if they steal it out of my pocket."

Mommy heats up Daddy's dinner, all the time talking in her quiet voice. Me and Marie are all still because we love to listen to Mommy's quiet voice. She says how she will go with him to the driver's license place in the morning. She says maybe who found the wallet is somebody with no nice family like us, or maybe who doesn't have a job, or maybe he finds the wallet and the wallet means he can eat dinner. It is one magic wallet that makes life better for a little while. She touches him on the back of his neck. He holds her hand there a minute, then he picks up Marie and takes us to get ready for bed. He tells our bedtime story about how the wallet makes some other kids have a good Christmas. Marie says, "will they get a rocking horse?" I don't know why she said that, I never heard her say anything about a rocking horse before. Daddy said maybe they'll get a rocking horse. I think about those kids and their new rocking horse all night.

I wasn't asleep yet because I was still thinking about the rocking horse and Daddy's wallet. Somebody knocks on our door. I think maybe it's Auntie Sheila who always bothers Mommy for something. I peek out the bedroom, and Marie is right behind me. It's an old lady. She's holding out Daddy's wallet. Daddy is pulling on his robe. The old lady says how she doesn't have a phone, so she came on the bus. She goes to leave, but Daddy says he's going to drive her—she says not to bother, but Daddy's going to win.

Daddy's goes to get dressed and Mommy goes, too, and Marie stands next to the old lady. Marie tells the old lady she looks like our Grandma. I tell Marie to be quiet because Marie will say anything to anybody, but the old lady answers that she's a grandma. Marie says, did you get a rocking horse with Daddy's wallet? Marie tells how we thought Daddy's wallet was gonna make everything better for somebody. The old lady says "I thought it was going to make things better, but then I thought it might make things worse for somebody else."

Mommy and Daddy come back. Mommy picks up Marie, and Daddy drives the old lady home. He says later that she wouldn't take a reward. He said she lives over McCully side. He invited her for Christmas dinner, and she's gonna come. He's gonna make sure, he's gonna pick her up in his taxi, so I guess he has to drive a little bit Christmas day after all.