Jerry’s Mistake

As Jerry waited for his father, he peered through the dim light that illuminated his father’s library. He studied the old maps that hung from the walls. He’d known he was going to get into trouble for ditching his brother Marcus at the movie theater. His friends were hanging out at the arcade, and the temptation to join them had been irresistible. He knew leaving his brother alone was irresponsible. Now he was impatient for his father to arrive so he could find out what his punishment would be.

At last the door opened and his father entered the room, taking a seat and gazing steadily at him like a hawk. Jerry squirmed under his glare, suddenly feeling insecure.

“Son,” said his father, “I can’t imagine what you were thinking when you left Marcus at the theater. Do you have any idea how immature and inappropriate that was?” Jerry felt his cheeks redden, and he lowered his eyes, turning away from his father’s disappointed look.

“I’m sorry, Dad,” he said, a lump in his throat. “I shouldn’t have done it.”

His father leaned forward with a sympathetic look and tousled Jerry’s hair with a slight smile. Jerry felt an immense sense of relief, as if the dark cloud that had settled over him had lifted with his confession.

“I’m glad you understand that your actions were wrong,” his father said. “I know it’s been tough not having Mom around to help anymore, but that means we have to be extra sure to look out for one another. Right?” Jerry nodded silently.

“Unfortunately, I still have to punish you. No more movies on your own—indefinitely—until you’ve proven that you can handle the responsibility of watching your brother. Agreed?”

“Agreed,” breathed Jerry. “Next time I’ll do better, Dad, I promise.”