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## They Were Late

by Sandra Banks

They were late, all three of them. The father led the group, running as fast as he could and then having to stop to allow the others to catch up. He was not young but looked fit. He was a senior manager. Even his holiday clothes were smart casual.

Mother followed more slowly. She was not really up to running and managed a strange pace, changing between walking fast and running slowly. She was hampered by her large handbag and several plastic bags, which swung awkwardly around her.

Finally, in no particular position in the group, came the teenage boy. He had stopped looking at his screen, but at least something was reaching his brain through the earphones. With long legs, he just walked quickly. It was clear that he was not really present but had simply not been able to be absent.

They were all late but that did not unite them. Mother quietly sobbed as she fought for breath. It was not her fault they were late. Father had done nothing to help and she resented that. He was in his usual “let’s get this done” mood. The boy did not care about anything.

Only Mother dared to think what would happen if they were to find the gate closed. The house of cards in which they sheltered would collapse. Her husband would realise that he must find a more suitable partner. Her son, like a bird forced out of the nest, would leave for the real world. Rosemary felt her own heart beating with excitement. Was it too late to have a life of her own?