

A Love Story
High School Entry

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The chair sat and stared at the girl. It had never seen anything like her before. She was small - probably the smallest person in the whole world.

The girl had danced over and was gazing with wide clear grey eyes, making the chair slightly uncomfortable. It was used to being looked at - just part of being a household item - but no one had ever peered like this, as if looking for more than stuffing and springs. Eager to make a good first impression, the chair smiled politely.

“Christine? Christine! Come here!” The girl was roughly jerked away by a tall thin woman with dark roots and a snub nose. “Don’t wander away again!” They both vanished from the furniture store.

The chair asked its neighbor, a wise antique writing desk, what sort of girl it was who was so small and had such large eyes. The desk kindly explained that it was a child, which would grow larger and become a person.

Fascinating. It wanted to see the child again.

An exceedingly nice chair it was, tailored with rich brown leather.

The chair was purchased and taken away, along with a young grandfather clock and an overly excitable chest of drawers. Christine danced around them as they were loaded into the car, singing nonsense songs to herself.

It was placed in a small room, by a door it had been unmercifully shoved through, across from a chatty redwood table and a silent glamorous mirror, and next to a tall, thin coat-stand. The chair was slightly afraid of the coat-stand, with its imperious height and solitude, but was determined not to be prejudiced.

That night there were people. They hung their long coats on the coat-stand, which accepted them graciously, and checked themselves in the mirror, which sweetly complimented them, eliciting a few shy smiles. They passed through into the room beyond, from whence people noises were issuing.

The mirror shuddered as a sound of breaking glass permeated the room and someone began to cry.

Christine was forcibly led through the doorway by the woman and was sat down on the chair, which made every attempt to soften the fall.

For the first time in its life, the chair felt a stab of worry. What was wrong?

“If you can’t control yourself, you can just sit here until you decide to be a little more grown up.” Christine’s grey eyes scowled. The woman, in the act of strutting out in her click-clacking heels, didn’t notice, but the chair did, and was struck with admiration, mixing with the anxiety to create a slightly sickening sensation.

“I hate her.”

The chair understood. It hated her too.

Over the next few days, the chair learned that it had been given a new name - Timeout. This was thrilling. Christine spent time with it every day, sometimes crying and raging, sometimes nonchalantly coloring in a little book. The chair realized that she was an artistic genius, and also sometimes managed to color in the lines.

Time doesn’t mean that much to a chair.

Older, taller, and wider, Christine was no longer ordered to the chair, but went willingly. She was never happy. The chair wanted her to know that she had a friend, and was always sure to hug her, and enclose her in pillow softness, but it did little to help her mood, and the chair began to sink into a depression, lifted only by Christine's presence, which was awaited in anticipation every day. When she didn't come, the chair would despair. But every day was a new day, brimming with potential, and even being busily passed over shed a tiny ray of grey light on the leather upholstery.

On some days, Christine would sit for hours, breathing in cigarettes - a term learned from the redwood table. These burning sticks terrified the chair, but their smoke and fire was endured for her, and the little box lay dormant and hidden underneath a particularly huge cushion - their secret. If Christine wanted them hidden, they would stay hidden.

She would go out, and the chair would wait patiently, trying not to worry. One night she came home later than usual. Something was wrong. Her bright grey eyes were clouded, and she was muttering and swaying. She fell and the chair caught her, careful to cushion the landing, staring at her worriedly, begging to know what the matter was. She only giggled.

"Christine!" The chair trembled at the voice.

The girl was on her feet, unsteady, but tensed for a fight.

The woman was snapping and growling, "Where have you been? Do you know what time it is? ...That had better not be alcohol I smell. For God's sake Christine, if you-

“Mother, stop!” The words were broken and angry, and the chair felt the welling frustration and entrapment. She needed to get out of here, and the chair would go with her, follow her anywhere to escape from this oppressive woman.

“Fine, I’ll stop. But you are not out for the rest of the year. Do you understand?”

“Mom, no-”

“Do you understand?”

“Mom, please-”

“Do you understand me?”

“Yes.”

“Good night.”

Christine flopped down dead on the chair and was enveloped in a huge hug.

“I hate her.” The chair understood. It hated her too.

She slept there that night and the chair stood guard, watching her every stir, keeping her safe and warm.

She was gone.

Christine had left, without a glance back - clutching a suitcase, she had simply danced out the door. The chair had begged her not to go, had tried to follow her, but to no avail. She was gone.

The chair was waiting. It no longer spoke, or even thought much, but simply stood at its post, reinvigorated with every creak of the door, sinking back down again when Christine repeatedly did not appear.

The woman shrunk. She became colorless as the world became older and older and Christine did not come.

One day, while waiting, a large group accompanied by sirens arrived in a hurry. It didn't matter - none of them were her.

After some time, they returned, carrying a great plank amongst them, slowly and silently marching through the door.

She was back, but she wasn't happy.

The chair couldn't stop worrying. Whatever a funeral was, it was making her sad.

When the sun went down, and all the unimportant people had gone away, she sat with the chair again. It hugged her, and told her that everything was going to be fine. She didn't notice, just sat there staring at nothing, smoking a cigarette.

"I loved her."

The chair understood. It had loved her too.

This time she didn't leave. She had brought children. She loved them, but she was exhausted and always yelling. The chair loved the children very much, and gladly suffered their little fingernails scratching the leather and tearing out stuffing. The chair had endurance, and Christine's children deserved everything it had.

Times were hard, and much of the furniture began to disappear. A man came and took away the redwood table, and the coat-stand. He tried to take the chair, but Christine stopped him.

“The chair is special,” she said in her perfect voice. “I picked it myself when I was five.” The chair glowed under the approving grey light of her eyes.

The children became people and left, but Christine was getting smaller. The chair could see it, and worried. The cigarettes were stealing her breath away. When she sat, the chair could hear her crackling. It kept trying to warn her that flames are dangerous, but she didn't listen. Her hair roughened, her skin wrinkled and she no longer danced through rooms, but her eyes were as clear and grey as ever.

Christine was sick. She coughed, she rarely left the chair, which relished every second spent with her, trying to give her strength.

She shuffled in and sat, settling down, and the chair hugged her as usual, making her as comfortable as possible.

She was alternately coughing and dragging on her cigarette.

Cough. Drag. Cough. Drag. Cough.

She settled in, breath crackling, and the chair held on to her with all its might, but she was slipping away, like she always had before.

The crackling stopped. The cigarette dropped from her shrunken fingers. Flames rose. She was at peace. And the chair was happy.