

A Second Chance

By Pauline Cartwright

Illustrated by Dee Texidor



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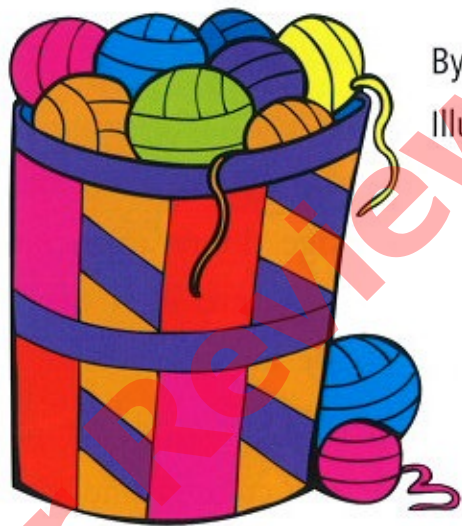
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My Favourite

I didn't like the way Mrs Jessop stared at me when I was in her shop. She always looked as though she was getting ready to be cross, so I thought she was ugly.

But I did like parts of her shop. I liked the book part where I sometimes stood reading parts of stories. I liked the toy part and I wished some of the wonderful toys were mine.

There were all sorts of bears and dolls. There were all sorts of pencils too: striped ones, long ones, some with stars on top. There were magnets for fridge doors and small pairs of scissors in plastic envelopes. There were balls of string in different colours, and rolls of tape and packets of stickers.

One box I loved to look into held a jumble of pencil sharpeners. They were all different colours and sizes and some were different shapes. I liked the ones shaped like dragons. I liked the ones in packets too. They were decorated with animals and flowers.



My favourite pencil sharpener was one that had a tiny white horse standing on top of it. I loved to look through the packet at its silver mane and its shiny black eyes. Afterwards I put it back into the box, beneath everything else. If no one could find it, then it would still be there for me to look at the next time I came into the shop. In a way, I felt as though the pencil sharpener was mine.



Sometimes Mrs Jessop would see me looking at the toys and say, "There's no need to touch. Just look."

One day she saw me holding the horse pencil sharpener. "Put it back, young lady. I don't think you need that," she said.

"How did Mrs Jessop know that I didn't need a pencil sharpener?" I thought crossly.

Mrs Jessop went to serve someone. No one was looking. I don't know why I did it, but I picked up the pencil sharpener, dropped it into my pocket and walked out of the shop.



My Guilty Secret

Outside the shop, I walked fast down the streets, thinking someone would know what I'd done. The packet in my pocket was small, but I felt that it probably bulged out so that everyone could see. I wished I hadn't taken it.





At home, I went straight to my room. I didn't even take the pencil sharpener out of the packet before I buried it deep in a drawer, under the jumble of socks that Mum had told me several times to tidy up.

That night, I took out my stolen treasure and looked at it. I felt very guilty. Somehow the tiny white horse with its silver mane wasn't the same when I was frightened that someone was going to see me looking at it. I put the packet back in my drawer and felt sad as well. I decided I would never, ever go into Mrs Jessop's shop again.