

Excerpt: End of Nostalgia Road

“There isn’t room for everyone in the sleigh,” Wendy said the afternoon after Christmas. “You guys go ahead.”

“There’s room if we all crunch together.” Tommy put an arm around his girlfriend Susan and pulled her closer.

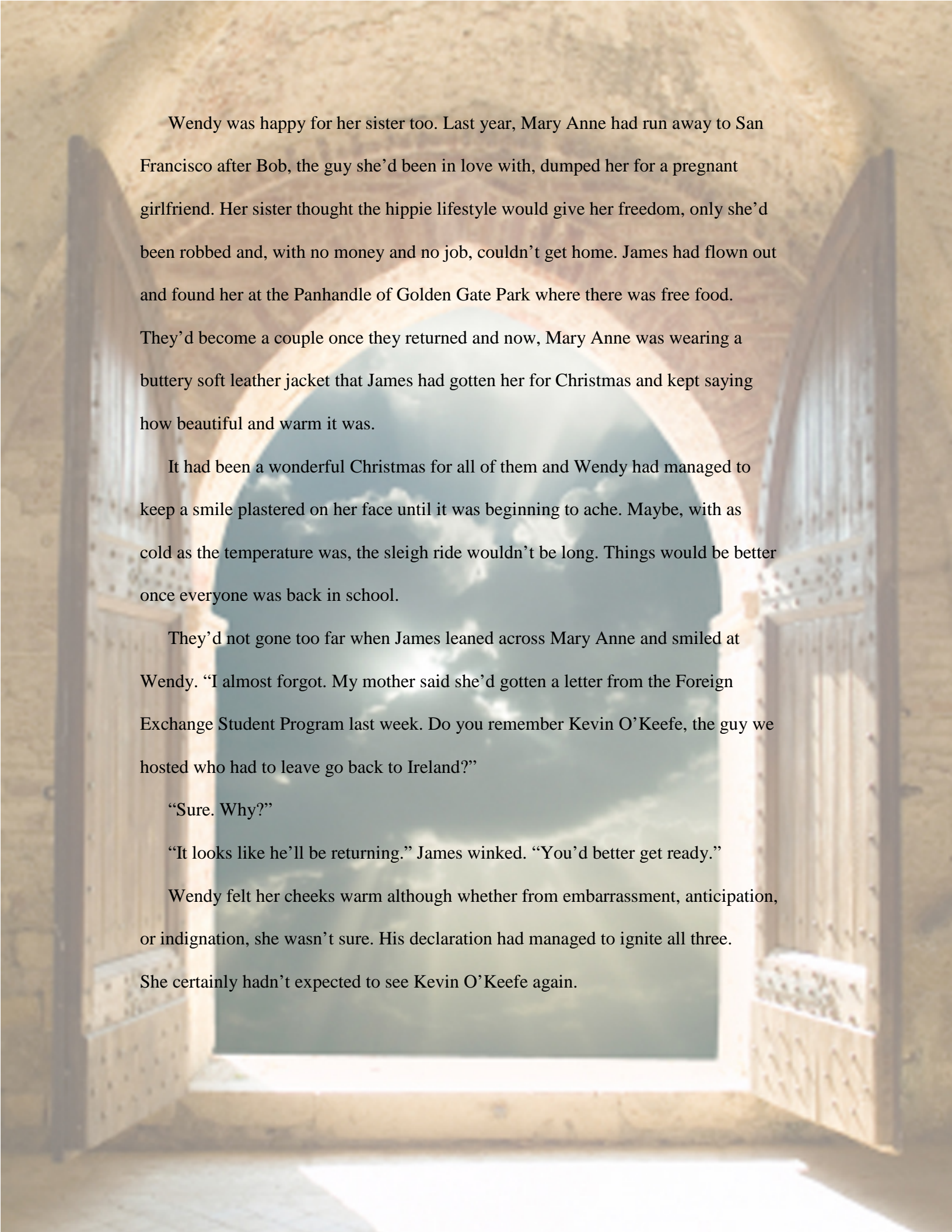
“Good idea.” Tim grinned and tugged his own girlfriend Carla onto his lap, causing her to giggle. “This will keep us warmer anyhow.”

“Really guys. It’s crowded.”

“Please get in.” Jo turned on the driver’s bench she was sharing with Luke and looked down. “You need to have some fun since you didn’t go with us on Christmas Eve and yesterday you kept busy in the kitchen.”

There was a reason for that, but Wendy didn’t say anything as she climbed into the sleigh beside Mary Anne and James. Everyone was couples except for herself. She was happy for all of them, she was, but she also felt that she stuck out like a sore thumb.

The twins’ girlfriends were nestled against them, already cooing and probably would be making out the minute they were away from prying adult eyes. Jo had her hand looped through Luke’s arm where she could look at the tiny diamond winking on her finger. It was called a ‘promise ring,’ which meant they were practically engaged. She and Luke had shown it off after all the neighbors had gone last night. And now, although Luke was in charge of driving the sleigh, he managed to look at Jo every few seconds and give her a smile, which Jo returned. She deserved her happiness.



Wendy was happy for her sister too. Last year, Mary Anne had run away to San Francisco after Bob, the guy she'd been in love with, dumped her for a pregnant girlfriend. Her sister thought the hippie lifestyle would give her freedom, only she'd been robbed and, with no money and no job, couldn't get home. James had flown out and found her at the Panhandle of Golden Gate Park where there was free food. They'd become a couple once they returned and now, Mary Anne was wearing a buttery soft leather jacket that James had gotten her for Christmas and kept saying how beautiful and warm it was.

It had been a wonderful Christmas for all of them and Wendy had managed to keep a smile plastered on her face until it was beginning to ache. Maybe, with as cold as the temperature was, the sleigh ride wouldn't be long. Things would be better once everyone was back in school.

They'd not gone too far when James leaned across Mary Anne and smiled at Wendy. "I almost forgot. My mother said she'd gotten a letter from the Foreign Exchange Student Program last week. Do you remember Kevin O'Keefe, the guy we hosted who had to leave go back to Ireland?"

"Sure. Why?"

"It looks like he'll be returning." James winked. "You'd better get ready."

Wendy felt her cheeks warm although whether from embarrassment, anticipation, or indignation, she wasn't sure. His declaration had managed to ignite all three.

She certainly hadn't expected to see Kevin O'Keefe again.