

**The Lost Key** It was a stormy evening when Emma arrived home from work, drenched from the unexpected rain. She fumbled through her purse, searching for the familiar metallic feel of her house key. But it wasn't there. A chill ran down her spine—not from the cold, but from the realization that she might have lost it. Her mind raced back to the café where she had stopped for coffee, the bus she had hurried onto, and the moment she had reached for her phone at the bookstore. Any of those places could be where she had left it. Determined not to panic, Emma pulled out her phone and called her best friend, Jake. "I think I lost my house key," she admitted, her voice edged with worry. Jake, always the problem solver, suggested retracing her steps. Without hesitation, Emma ran through the now-empty streets, her shoes splashing in puddles as she made her way back to the bookstore. The cashier shook his head—no keys had been found. The café was closing, and the barista hadn't seen anything either. Just when she was about to give up, she remembered the bus. She had felt something slip from her pocket when she had adjusted her bag. Rushing to the bus terminal, she spotted the driver from earlier. "Excuse me, did anyone turn in a key?" she asked breathlessly. The driver thought for a moment, then reached into a small lost-and-found box. A single silver key lay there, slightly worn but unmistakably hers. Relief flooded over her as she clutched it tightly. As she walked home, she couldn't shake the nagging feeling that she needed a better system for keeping track of important things. Maybe a spare key with Jake, or a small tracker attached to it. The night had been stressful, but at least it had taught her a lesson. Unlocking her front door, she sighed in relief. Just as she stepped inside, her phone buzzed. A text from Jake read, "Check your coat pocket one more time." Frowning, she reached inside—and there, cold against her fingers, was her original key.