

## Davina Pavey

Once again, Kristina barely got to her bus in time, and when she did finally get on, she headed straight for the back seats. On her way there, Graham Kepler stuck his foot out into the aisle and tripped her, causing the hatbox to slip out of her arms and roll down the aisle toward the front of the bus. Hester Crumeful snatched it up, just before it rolled down the bus steps. She stared at Kristina with a devious, smirk on her face.

“Give that back to me right now, Hester Crumeful!” Kristina yelled angrily.

Hester didn’t answer. Instead, she threw the hatbox to Graham, who caught it like a football. The rest of the children watched with great enthusiasm to see what the next play would be. When Mr. Macgregor looked through his rear-view mirror and saw what was going on, he quickly brought the bus to a halt at the side of the road. Then he got out of his seat and went down the aisle toward Graham. Graham sunk down in his seat, holding the hatbox in his lap, looking very cowardly.

Mr. Macgregor pointed his stubby finger at Graham’s face. Squinting one eye, he said in a heavy Scottish brogue, “Now ye

listen t'me, young laddie. Anymore trouble outta ye, an' it'll be the last time ye ride the bus for the rest of the year!"

Though reluctant, Graham handed the hatbox back to Kristina. She quickly sat down in the last row of seats.

Mr. Macgregor went back to his seat, and when Graham was sure he wasn't looking, he turned to Kristina and whispered, "Just wait; I'll get you back. You'll see."

Kristina ignored him and looked out the window.

"Teacher's pet. Sissy baby! It's probably just something for self-improvement in there anyway, like a book on how not to look like a nerd," Hester scoffed as she chomped loudly on her chewing gum. She blew a huge bubble that popped and stuck to her entire face.

Kristina looked over at Hester and couldn't help laughing.

Graham and Hester knew that Kristina had been given a gift from Miss Hensley, because they had been eavesdropping at the classroom door the whole time Miss Hensley had been talking with Kristina. The two of them got off at the stop just before Kristina's, and Kristina watched from the window as Graham made a large snowball and threw it at Hester, hitting her in the back of the head. Soon after, Mr. Macgregor pulled the bus to a stop and opened the doors.

"Now you an' your critter have a merry Christmas, an' try to stay out ay mischief," he said as Kristina exited the bus.

"Thanks Mr. Macgregor. You have a merry Christmas also," Kristina replied.

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Ingrid Kingsly came into the entryway just as Kristina got home. "Put your things away upstairs and hurry back down," she instructed Kristina. "Your dinner is on the table. I have to leave here in fifteen minutes to meet your father for his office Christmas party."

Kristina put Raymond in his cage and shoved the hatbox under her bed. She wanted to take her time with opening it, and enjoy the moment, so she planned to do it after she ate. Then it dawned on her that if her mother was going to her father's office Christmas party, she'd be getting a sitter. *Oh, I hope it's not Davina Pavey*, she thought.

Davina was two years older than Kristina—fourteen and a half, to be exact—and she lived three houses farther down the street. Whenever she came to watch Kristina, she'd spend her time either eating the cupboards empty or following Kristina around the house, hoping to see her do something for which she could snitch on her to Mrs. Kingsly.

Kristina could just imagine it: Davina, with her long, greasy black braids, Coke-bottle glasses, and beady little eyes, standing in her bedroom doorway. She'd be eating potato chips that would get stuck in her braces, and she'd watch every move that Kristina made.

Kristina entered the kitchen, where her mother was busy doing dishes, and sat down at the table to eat. At least dinner was a plus—macaroni and cheese out of the box; her favorite.

"Oh, I forgot to mention to you," her mother said as Kristina squeezed large amounts of catsup onto her macaroni. "That nice girl, Davina Pavey, is coming to be your sitter tonight."

"Oh, great," Kristina muttered.

"What was that?" her mother asked.

"Uh, I said that's great," Kristina replied, trying to act more chipper.

"I have to hurry and get ready," her mother said, heading out the kitchen, just as the doorbell rang. "Would you get that, Kristina?"

Kristina walked to the front door and peeked through the peephole. "Just as I expected—Davina," she said. She opened the door. "Hi, Davina," she said flatly.

Davina wiped her nose with the back of her hand and walked into the house. "Where's your mother?" she asked.

"She's upstairs, getting ready," Kristina answered. She stood there, uncomfortably, for a few minutes until her mother appeared at the top of the stairs.

"Hello, Davina," her mother said brightly.

"Hello, Mrs. Kingsly. Wow, you do look beautiful tonight," Davina replied.

Kristina rolled her eyes in disgust. Davina would always try to butter up her mother.

"Why, thank you, Davina," her mother answered. Then she slipped on her long coat and applied her lipstick in the entryway

mirror. “We’ll be home by ten o’clock. Help yourself in the kitchen,” she said to Davina. As Kristina started up the stairs, her mother looked up at her and said, “Now, you do as Davina tells you, and remember, Grandma’s coming tomorrow, so we have to get up early and clean this place. Bedtime’s at 9:30 sharp!”

Davina looked up at Kristina with a hideous grin on her face. She loved having the power to dictate orders.

As soon as Kristina’s mother left, Davina headed for the kitchen to see what type of food she could devour. This meant that Kristina finally had a chance to open her present without being bothered—or so she thought. She got the hatbox out from under the bed, but just as she was about to open it up, she heard Davina’s heavy steps coming up the stairs. *How predictable*, Kristina thought.

Davina opened the door and sauntered into Kristina’s bedroom, eating a large corned beef sandwich drenched in mayonnaise.

“It’s impolite not to knock,” Kristina said, irritated.

Davina ignored her remark. She was much too interested in the hatbox that Kristina had pushed behind her back. Smacking away on her sandwich, she sauntered over to Kristina, and asked, “What’s that you’re hiding?”

“It’s none of your business,” Kristina snapped.

Davina placed her sandwich, still oozing mayonnaise, on the dresser. Then she reached behind Kristina and grabbed the hatbox.



“Give it back!” Kristina yelled.

“Does your mother know your hiding this?” Davina snapped,

a chunk of bread flying out of her mouth. “Your mother will thank me for catching you sneaking around like this!”

As Davina started prying at the clasp, Kristina felt anger bubbling up inside her, and she clenched her fists, wanting to punch Davina.

“What’s wrong with this thing? Why won’t it open?” Davina asked, her eyes growing very squinty and her face turning plum red. When she couldn’t open it, she tossed it back to Kristina. “Well, if I can’t open it, then neither can you. Have fun.” With that, she picked up her sandwich, licked the dripping mayonnaise off its edge, and sauntered out of the room.

Kristina got up and slammed the door behind Davina. Then she picked up the hatbox and tried to open it, but it was no use; the clasps wouldn’t budge. “Why did you have to give me this thing, Miss Hensley? It’s caused me nothing but trouble, and to top it off, it’s so darn old that it won’t open anyway.” Feeling very frustrated, she shoved it back under her bed.