

Short Story

Strong Student Model

Trapped

1. Strong beginning catches reader's attention and sets the stage.

"We're in trouble now," Hayley said, watching the heavy steel doors slide and seal shut behind them. The airless cubicle now resembled a silvery tomb from which there was no hope of escape.

Hayley and Dan had been investigating the strange sounds they heard coming from the back of the abandoned bank building all month. Once they had gotten inside, the sounds had first become softer and softer, then louder and louder, as they approached what had once been the bank's vault.

"It's over here," Dan had said, motioning to Hayley.

The two sleuths-in-training, who hoped to become members of the Detectives Club, knew they were about to make a discovery when the walls shut before their very eyes.

3. Good details set the tone of suspense, fear.

"It seems like someone doesn't want to be discovered," Hayley offered. "Or something . . ." she let her voice trail off at the thought of something not quite human watching them squirm in their silver closet.

"Well, are you happy now?" came a voice that seemed oddly familiar, yet threatening at the same time. "I wondered how long it would take you."

Then the lights went out and things got very quiet. All Dan and Hayley could hear was the hammering of their own hearts.

5. Dialogue gives insight into Dan's and Hayley's characters.

"Now I know how those insects we look at under the microscope must feel," Dan whispered. "Why am I whispering. It's not as if . . . it doesn't know where we are? Hey! Show yourself, you cowardly . . ."

"Quiet! Don't make it mad, Dan," Hayley interrupted. "Who knows what it plans to do with us? I wouldn't want to make it any worse."

"How could it be any worse?" Dan's voice was shaking. "They're going to find our bodies here when they knock down this building next year. We're doomed!"

Then the walls began to slide open and the crack of brightness became a spotlight on the trapped pair. They heard the cackling laugh, and they knew it was Ann from the Detectives Club, playing a trick on them.

"I've been wondering how long it would take you two to finally investigate the noises I've been making for a month. Congratulations! You pass the 'Nosy Test'. Welcome to our club."

2. Background information clues the reader in to what's going on.

4. "Oddly familiar" foreshadows climax and resolution.

6. Vivid details make the reader feel Dan's sense of doom.

7. Strong ending told in dialogue is very effective.