

TWISTED

**THE
TIME TRAP**

Wil Mara

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The door swung back and clunked against the wall. Then Delilah came in dragging the little couch. She was huffing and puffing. She brought the couch to the center of the room and put it down. It was light green with flowers all over it.

She sat on it to catch her breath. The pain in her arms was terrible. So was the pain in her back, her shoulders, her legs . . . *everything* seemed to hurt. But she was happy. It took forever to get the couch down the basement steps. *But it was worth it*, she thought. *Totally worth it.*

Delilah Bremmer was thirteen. She was very skinny, and she had long hair that was as black as hair could be. Her eyes were ocean blue like her

mom's. She also had her tan skin. Her mom had been born in Mexico. Delilah had gone there twice to visit family with her mom. Her dad went with them. Those were good times. The best, in fact.

Delilah thought about one of those trips to Mexico as she sat on the green couch. She remembered this restaurant they'd visited. The power kept going out because there was a big storm. The lights flickered every time thunder boomed. But the cook somehow made their food anyway. Her parents didn't care that it took so long, either. They were laughing until they could barely breathe. What a crazy, fun night that was.

Then she shoved these thoughts out of her mind. *Too busy right now*, she thought. *Way too busy*. And too busy to think about school, too. About how much she hated it these days. And how much trouble she'd been getting into lately. And how angry this made her mom . . .

Way too busy to think about it, she thought

again.

She got up and went to the other couch in the room. It was a nice couch—but it wasn't the *right* one.

She leaned down to get her fingers under it. Then she dragged it out. When she came back, she put the new couch in its place. She stepped back and gave it a good looking-over. She smiled, and a warm feeling washed through her.

It's perfect, she told herself. At last . . . everything is RIGHT.

She lay on the new couch and tucked her hands behind her head. Then she looked at everything else in the room—the flat-screen TV, the cordless telephone, the PlayStation . . . It really was right, all of it. Because it was all four years old. *Exactly* four.



Delilah got the idea from a message someone sent her on AllMyFriends. At first it looked like just another junky, irritating ad. The person who sent it had no profile picture and no real name. Then she saw this at the top—

HOW WOULD YOU LIKE TO GO BACK TO THE BEST DAYS OF YOUR LIFE?

Below that was a link to an article. The article was about putting together a room from another time. It was called a “retro room.” She looked up “retro” in a dictionary. It meant: “Having to do with an earlier time.” The article said you needed to fill a room with things from that time. The more “time-correct” the things were, the better the room would be.

At the bottom of the article was the comments section. One guy from Canada said he made a retro room from 1966. That was his

senior year in high school. A married couple from Arizona said they had a retro room from 1993. That was the year they met.

Then Delilah saw a comment that really caught her attention. The person's screen name was LonelyGirl99. She lived in Florida, and her parents were no longer married. LonelyGirl99 wanted to go back to the time when her mom and dad were still together. When they all lived in the same house. And they did things as a family. And there was no yelling. Or slamming doors. Or sadness.

Or sadness . . .

Those last two words shot through Delilah like an arrow. *I'd give anything to go back to the days when there was no sadness. Anything in the world.*

Her parents had split up last year. She begged them to get back together. But they wouldn't. She couldn't understand why. They had been so in love at one time. What had changed?

How had it changed? And *why* did her parents have to be so stupid about everything? Couldn't they see what it was doing to her? Didn't they know how ripped-apart she felt? Didn't they *CARE*?

No, Delilah thought. *They don't.*

So she decided to make a retro room just like LonelyGirl99. A room from back when everything was perfect. And she'd visit it as much as possible. Even if her parents didn't like the idea—and they didn't. But that was too bad. She was going to do this.

Delilah had to look through old pictures her mom had taken with her phone. She'd cried a lot when she went through those pictures. But she had to do it. She made a list of the things that reminded her of those great days. Many of them weren't in the house anymore. Her dad had taken some when he moved out. Other things had been sold or thrown away.

Delilah went to yard sales. She went to the

thrift store in town. And she found some things on eBay. Her grandma gave her the money she needed. Delilah called her “G-ma.” G-ma was like her best friend. She seemed to know exactly how Delilah felt. She was perfectly okay with Delilah’s idea for the room. She even helped her carry some things downstairs and set them up.

And now, more than a year later, it was done. Every single thing was the same as in the house four years ago. The chairs, the lamps, the pictures . . . everything. It was all “time-correct,” like the article said.

Just one last thing, Delilah thought. And I’ll get that on the way home from school tomorrow.

Smiling, she got up and started to leave. Then, from the corner of her eye, she thought she saw something on the wall next to the picture of her parents’ honeymoon. It was tall and rectangular, much like a door. And it was made of a faint, shimmering haze. When she looked back,

however, it was gone. In fact, she wasn't even sure it had really been there at all.

She left the room and thought of it no more.