

The Day the Earth Shook

by RV Staff Writer E.T.

One night at dinner, a very strange thing happens in Caroline's town. Will their house still be safe? Students will read the passage and answer follow-up questions about character and other story elements.

Every night, Caroline at dinner with her mom, dad, and older brother Graham. When they sat at the table, they each told a story about their day at work or school. Then they each told about something new they had learned that day. Sometimes the stories were serious, and other times they were fun.

One night, Caroline was about to tell a joke she had learned from her teacher. She put her fork down on her plate so she could use her hands to make the same silly motions her teacher did when he got to the best part. When Caroline set her fork down on the plate, it made a rattling sound.

But then something strange happened. The fork didn't stop rattling. It shook and clinked against the plate, all by itself.

Caroline looked up. All the glasses on the table were shaking, too. The milk inside was rippling, just like it did at the lake when Graham threw pebbles into the water.

Then Caroline felt like her chair was rattling, too. "Mom?" she asked. She felt scared.

But as quickly as it began, all the strange sounds and feelings ended. It was suddenly very quiet in the house.

Graham burst into tears. "What was that?" he cried. He ran over to sit in Dad's lap.

Mom looked at Dad. "I think it was an earthquake," she said.

Caroline had read about earthquakes at school. Once there was a very big earthquake in San Francisco, and many houses fell down. Would their house fall down, too?

Dad took his phone out of his pocket and began scrolling. "Looks like everyone in town felt the same thing," he said. "It really was an earthquake."

"Is our house going to be okay?" Caroline asked. Instead of telling her joke, she told everyone about the book she read about earthquakes. They sounded very scary.

"Everything is fine," said Mom. "Earthquakes happen all the time, and most are so small you don't even notice. Nothing even fell off a shelf, so the house is stronger than that little earthquake."

Once Caroline heard that, she began to relax. She wouldn't like to have an earthquake every day, but it was exciting to feel one in real life. She was glad that everyone in her house and her town were safe. And she was definitely excited to talk about it with her friends at school the next day. Who knew dinner would be such an adventure?

Questions

1. How does Caroline first notice that something strange is happening at dinner?
2. How does Graham feel about the earthquake? How can you tell?
3. Why is Caroline nervous about the earthquake?
4. Have you ever been scared of something happening in nature? What was it like?