



by Cassandra Tse



**Scene:** A kitchen. EMMA and JAKE sit at the table, which has a small easel displaying a sign that reads *Family Meeting*. EMMA swings her legs impatiently.

**EMMA.** Where are they?

**JAKE.** Dunno. They should be here soon. I texted, emailed, and shouted up the hall. That usually works.

**MUM and DAD** enter in a rush. Both are holding phones.

**MUM.** Here I am, sweeties. What's up?

**DAD.** Came as soon as I could ...

**EMMA.** Finally!

**DAD (to JAKE).** You mentioned a new recipe for DIY magnetic slime. Sounds amazing!

**MUM (confused).** You told me you wanted a heart-to-heart ...

**JAKE.** Not quite. Sorry, guys, but I had to think of something that would get you both here.

**DAD (losing interest).** No slime?

**JAKE.** The slime was a lie. Actually, we wanted to call a family meeting.

*He points dramatically to the sign on the table.*

*EMMA applauds. MUM and DAD groan, turn away, and start tapping their phones.*

**EMMA (exasperated).** Oh, come on!

**JAKE.** Can you just give it a chance?

**DAD (not looking up).** Sure thing, kiddo. I've just got this one post to schedule ...

**MUM.** I just need to reply to this comment.

**JAKE.** This is exactly what we wanted to talk about.

Mum, how long have you been writing your blog?

**MUM.** *Mummy Musings?* Since I was pregnant with you, of course, honey!

**EMMA.** And, Dad? You've been making YouTube videos for years, right?

**DAD (self-satisfied).** That's right! This June, it'll be ten years exactly since I started *Kiwi Dad DIY*.

**JAKE.** Right. So we had a couple of thoughts ...

**EMMA.** Ideas ...

**JAKE.** A few suggestions ... for some new house rules.

**MUM (alarmed).** Rules? What kinds of rules?

*EMMA and JAKE look at each other, then both stand.*

*JAKE points to the easel with a ruler.*

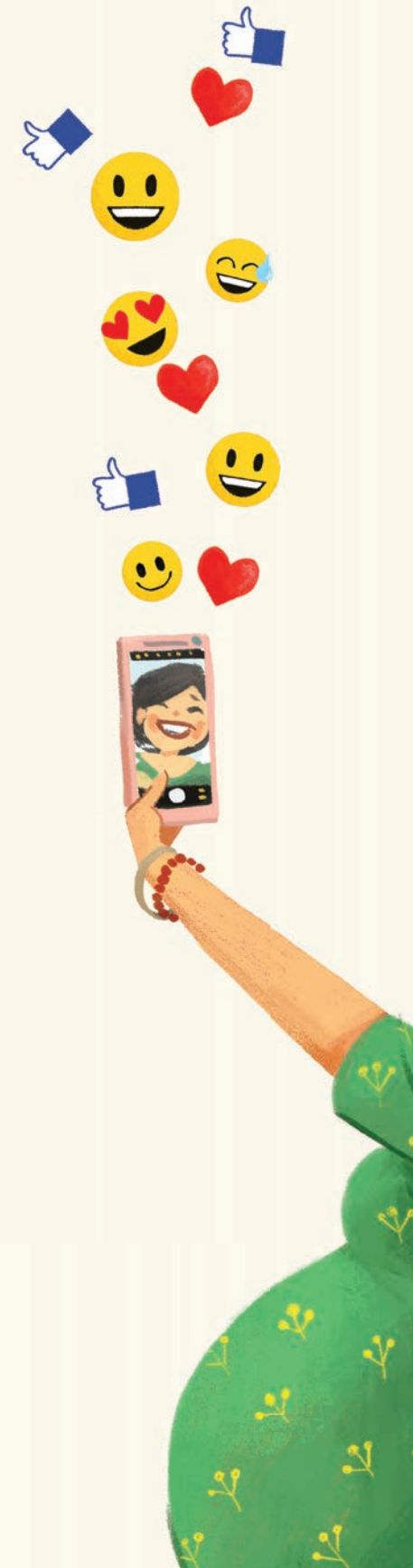
**JAKE (coughing dramatically).** Ahem. New rule number one!

*EMMA reveals a new sign: No phones at the table.*

*MUM and DAD gasp in horror.*

**MUM.** But, Jake –

**DAD.** My fans! How am I supposed to make a video of “Five vegetarian meals in ten minutes or less” without my phone? I have to film making each one.



**MUM.** How do I finish my blog post about whānau connectedness in the modern world without a photo of my charming family round the dinner table?

**DAD.** Think of the sponsored content, Jake!

**MUM.** Yes. The spon-con!

**JAKE.** That's another thing. You need to stop relying on the free food from advertisers.

**EMMA.** It wasn't so bad when we got that box of potato chips. Or that huge pile of instant noodles. But ten boxes of canned green beans ...

*She looks haunted.*

**JAKE** (nodding). Dark times.

**MUM.** Jakey ... sweetheart. You don't understand. Being online influencers is our job.

**DAD.** You've got to take the good with the beans.

**MUM.** And, really, what's so bad about a few photos at the dinner table every night?

**EMMA.** But it's not just at dinner! You're *always* taking photos.

*As she talks, DAD is taking a selfie with the "No phones at the table" sign.*

**EMMA.** See? Dad's doing it right now!

**JAKE.** Dinner time isn't photo time. It's time to eat – and talk! So no pictures, no posting, no hashtags at the table. Is that too much to ask?

*MUM and DAD look at each other sheepishly.*

**DAD.** Fine.

**MUM.** No phones at the table. We can do that.

**DAD** (doing the thumbs-up). Old school. I like it.

**JAKE.** OK. Then let's move on to rule number two ...

*EMMA reveals a new sign: Be yourself! Stop trying to be cool.*

**DAD** (offended). Hey, just 'cause I'm your dad doesn't mean I'm not hip.

**EMMA.** Dad, you're like thirty-six.

**JAKE.** Super old.

**DAD.** Would a couple of old fogies do this?

*MUM and DAD dab in unison. EMMA and JAKE are unimpressed.*

**EMMA.** That's the kind of stuff we're talking about.

**JAKE.** It's embarrassing.

**EMMA.** For everyone.

**MUM.** But –

**JAKE** (firmly). Moving on.



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Loving these green beans from @greenbeancannery  
My kids can't get enough #beansforlife #loveagreenbean  
#gifted #noboundaries #sponcon



Cleaner than clean! Thanks to @sparkles

EMMA reveals a new sign: *Respect our privacy!* MUM and DAD begin to protest, but JAKE holds up a finger for silence.

EMMA (taking out a notebook). We'd like to share some of the titles from your recent posts.

(reading) "Five pranks to pull on your kids."

DAD. You've gotta admit – those were funny.

EMMA. "My top toilet-training tips."

MUM (dismissively). Oh, you were only two when I wrote that.

JAKE (reading from his own notebook). "The dumbest questions my kids have ever asked ... part one!"

DAD. Well, perhaps I shouldn't have said "dumbest", but –

EMMA. "A daughter's first crush."

MUM. Harmless fun!

JAKE. "My son's biggest sporting fails."

EMMA. "How I cured my nine-year-old's fear of the dark."

JAKE. "My son just isn't that popular! Here's how that makes me feel."

EMMA. "My daughter's hilarious secrets!"

JAKE. "Changing bodies: An update."

EMMA. "Exclusive birth video!" (She looks at her parents.) Well? Anything to say for yourselves?

MUM and DAD are silent. They look ashamed. JAKE walks over to them.

JAKE. I know you guys just want to write about being parents, but we didn't ask for this. You're stealing our lives, and it's not fair!

EMMA. I don't want the whole world knowing everything about me.

JAKE. Me neither – and especially not the private stuff. I thought that was between us.

EMMA. I just want to be a normal family. With boundaries. Some things shouldn't go online.

MUM (sadly). I'm so sorry. I didn't realise you felt that way. I never stopped to think.

DAD (embarrassed). I guess ... I guess we got a bit carried away. All those likes and comments and followers ... it gets kind of addictive.

JAKE. So you agree? New rule: Only post about us if we say it's OK.

MUM (smiling in agreement). I think that's more than fair. Come here.

She opens her arms for a hug. EMMA and JAKE accept it. DAD wraps all three of them in a big bear hug. From within the huddle, JAKE sticks up his hand.

JAKE. Oh! One more thing.

He breaks from the hug and reveals one last sign on the easel: *No more Facebook.*

DAD (aghast). Jakey! Be reasonable.

MUM (shaking her head at JAKE). Honey, we need to talk about this ...



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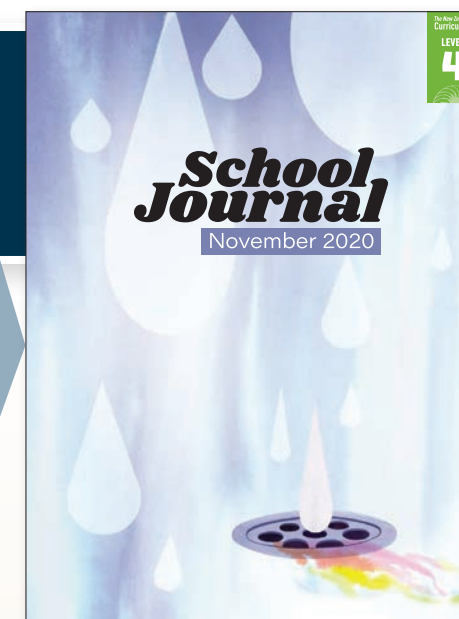
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