

Sitting on the new fifteen years ago carpeting with my nose full of kneecaps and Downy I knew I was in trouble, with that being my middle name, I am always ready to play.

“Remember when you changed me in *all* the rooms?” the carpeting asked for the house the lesser of two evils. Nodding I did. I remember every strip I pulled and rolled, every drop of sweat gathered, every smell it held, and how I made it go away when I took it to the street. I sat there listening to the creaks and moans of the house, ignoring that my world was and is tilting and liling like a dingy in rough waters searching for a savior.

The house Heather bought for us cried out like a blank page wanting to be colored in outside of the lines. The kitchen begged for the smells of both mold from the fifty-year drip that was seventh on the “important things” list behind food, the roof, the mortgage, insurance, clothing, birthdays gifts to the new family members chosen and born, and whatever food that keeps the fucking kids quiet.

I knew that the living room with its back-to-back fireplaces would never smell like the burnt dust being heated by a furnace desperately needing an upgrade. I sat there rocking back and forth knowing that the open concept room would fill with warm fresh air not the life filled moments I told you to clean there. Yes, the living area smelled of sunshine and promise, while mamas’ smelled of fear, pain, hard work with a need to keep the neighbors and wind out. But which was better the promise or the reality?

I sat there looking past the doorway and down the three-foot carpeted hallway that is the entrance to the bathroom and the three bedrooms. I stared at the body to the many legs of the house with its beige carpets. I stared and thought of the white carpet leading to the new rooms. I wondered how many years would take for it to stop emitting that fresh carpet stank and smell of dinner, the many steps of someone making a difference, dust, blood, sweat and tears. I hugged myself tighter when I thought back to the moment I stepped into one of the rooms, and breathed in the crisp smell of nothingness, I knew as my soul wept that no one had lived nor died there. That no one ran into this large quiet space, screaming to be left alone to jump, fall and sprawl into a bed that held them when others couldn’t. In that breath I knew that babies didn’t vomit, dogs didn’t pee, and cigarettes weren’t smoked in it like the large room in the back of the front of the house.

My eyes moved to the side and in the emptiness where the table was, I was transported to the new house. I couldn’t see a table in that dining room that wasn’t modern and cold, knowing that the warmth of wood just couldn’t survive there. Instead of a warm place where laughter floated around and circling everyone, it rose and fell like a lead balloon, crushing every plate and hope around it. I knew that the new table wouldn’t strain under the weight of cakes, pies, turkeys, hams, glue, homework, Publisher’s clearinghouse, and the air wouldn’t have the tinge of lemon pledge sprayed to make the fingerprints and lies go away.

I pulled myself closer as a shiver ran down my spine with the words my heart beat out, kitchen... kitchen... kitchen... kitchen. The fridge shiny and invitingly empty will never hold magnets, recipes, pictures, photographs, or scripture. That intentions would be lost in the many steps from fridge to sink to stove.

Closing my eyes, I let mama put a blanket over my shoulders, and lead me to where I had lived. Bathroom mirrors showing wiggling baby teeth and horrible hairstyles. The basement filled with spiders and spies. The front yard glowing with fireflies. Bedrooms and belts. Living area and laughter. Kitchen and love.

I stand.

Time to leave the nest.