

She opens the door and steps inside. Drops her keys on the foyer table and walks down the short hallway into the kitchen and stops.

She remembers.

They worked on it together, a weekend of sanding and painting and trimming. Once worn cabinets new again by their hands and their love. It was love at the time for the two of them, she thinks. It must have been.

She runs her hand on one of the cabinets and admires the craftsmanship. She smiles. He was certainly handy and taught her a lot about how to make things pretty again. And this was a good day, good days actually. A concerted effort to make something together, a tangible record of their relationship and their being.

David Allen Montgomery helped revive her kitchen and maybe her faith. He spent nights washing dishes and then putting those same dishes away into these cabinets after she had cooked a meal fit for a king. And he was a king, that's what made the inevitable so inevitable.

She didn't see it at first, she always lacked that understanding. It felt right to put him first, never a question in her mind that it was the right thing to do.

But kings only know kingly things and it became more difficult over time. She tried harder, worked harder to serve this master but it did not matter. One day the phone calls stopped.

As she walks into the dining room, this dining room and its components, everything fits together nicely. Dove white paint, Pottery Barn hutch and table, plush Caramel Coffee carpet. She discards her shoes and rubs her feet into the brown fluffiness. Heaven.

She pictures that first candlelight dinner with Alexander Murphy after he became Director of Institutional Investing. She was so proud, always proud when those she adored realized a hope or dream. The dinner was divine and the horizontal celebration courtesy of the plush carpet more so.

It continued like that for a bit, the occasional dinner followed by a shag on the rug. Then, gradually, it changed. Dinners came later and later, eaten in silence before disappearing into electronic device and sleep. Lonely.

She tried to reignite their former passion through dress and song but he was somewhere else. Work became his love and their distance grew until he never came home. No call, no text, no goodbye. Just an empty house and a carpet full of memories.

In the living room, the functional elegance surprises her. Unlike many rooms of this nature in many houses across this country, it was a room to be enjoyed not revered. And she made it that way. Yes, the Snowdrop sofa and matching love seat culled from the interior design playbook were de rigueur but she made sure to include a comfortable version in one corner. Near that, a mahogany bookcase replete with books for reading not purposeful grandiosity.

That was his room, William's room. William Reed. They'd read and talk of things that were worth talking about. Society's ills and proposed fixes, the existentialism of man, the obligation of man to his neighbor. He was the son of a teacher, a brilliant man in his own right, but incapable of anything more than the perfunctory. Occasionally employed, often drunk, he regarded success with fear and disdain. But she loved him.

In his lucid moments he was a treasure. He could be the life of the party and charm men and women alike. In those moments she

knew he was right for her. She wanted it and knew she could make it work.

But he found another. She doesn't remember where they were or what they were doing but in a moment he was talking to some girl thing and in the next remarking on her dress and beauty. Then quiet phone conversations that ended when she was around. Then, alone again.

She glances at the clock. Six forty-five PM. She makes her way down the hallway to her bedroom and pauses at her study. She looks at the boxes stacked floor to ceiling. That's next, she thinks. Once I fix this, I'll be done.

She turns on the light and glances back down the hallway to the kitchen and notices the perfect sheen of the hardwood. She tries not to let her mind go there but it does anyway. She can hear the cacophony of sounds: the thud of body to floor, the screams, and the sirens. She sees people and uniforms and feels the visceral impact of past chaos and how everything disappeared in a moment. She disappeared. She doesn't remember his name, can't remember. She remembers all of their names except this one. She knows why.

She turns off the light and steps into her bedroom. Memories flicker in and out, some good. A California King with eight hundred thread count sheets takes precedence. Scads of pillows cover most of the white down comforter. There is no television in the bedroom. Not one of them could ever convince her otherwise. This was a quiet place, a place to be calm. A harbor protecting her from the tumult and enmity of the day.

She rubs her hands along the comforter and smiles. That was worth remembering. HE was worth remembering.

She stands and strips off her clothes, pulls back the covers and climbs into bed. She opens the drawer to her nightstand and pulls out the latest Chick Lit. Flips through the pages and tosses it onto the bed. Grabs a pill bottle and reads the fine print. Twists off the cap and empties the contents into her hand and swallows. Washes it down with a stale glass of water.

She sleeps.