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Palshaw

English IV

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Moving Day

 *Whoompsh*. The smell of oil and dust flooded the lot adjacent to the big, yellow truck. The monstrous, heaving sound of the engine eased into a quiet purr. A duet of shrill whines replaced the magnificent motor. A pair of small hands tugged at my mother’s wrists, while another set wrapped themselves around her leg. My blonde, freckled younger sister, Noelle, and I were tired--from the new, constant cardboard smell in our house, from the short tempers our parents had developed, from the thought of leaving the comfort of La Cañada, our beautiful house, and wonderful friends.

 My dad’s restlessness and irritability could be heard from across our childhood home. Footsteps dropped like a skydiver without a parachute--hard and fast--and every once in awhile, we would hear an exasperated sigh. He was most likely checking the traffic or “finishing something real quick.”

 In spite of every inch of that house being filled with an anxious aroma, my mom had managed to stay calm throughout the day. She dragged us along as she brought box after box out to the curb. Her auburn hair shone brightly the moment it touched the sunlight, and her dirt-brown eyes turned copper. Eventually, she took a break to stretch her stiff joints and get something to soothe her burning throat. Noelle and I were presented with her silver laptop, the only instruction being to find something we agreed on, which, as always, was *Looney Tunes: Back in Action.*

 After Porky signed off, I ventured back outside. Dad had finally finished whatever chore he’d been working on and was loading bubble-wrapped furniture into the mustard-yellow Penske. He was riding up and down on the metal lift, his golden hair following him. I hopped on alongside of him. My dark brown eyes gleamed because, even though it was a simple procedure, it was magnificent. The machinery was likely minutes away from breaking after the continuous blows the switch endured.

 “Kalley, hop off,” Dad scolded. “Go see if you left anything behind.”

 That is my dad’s way of saying “get lost” or “leave me alone.” It’s meant to sound kinder than the alternatives, and it usually is. That day, however, the artificial high-spirited noise pushed through clenched teeth didn’t mask the true intention.

I complied.

Inside our brick home, Noelle was chasing our beautifully dumb cat Twinkle. Twinkle, after having run several circles around the family room, finally hid under our worn oak table and relaxed, thinking the wood created some sort of forcefield. Of course, it didn’t. Noelle felt around the cold, hard legs until her hand touched grey fur. Some of it stayed behind for Noelle to enjoy, for Twinkle had sprinted off, nails scratching at the dark floor.

Our skittish tabby, Sparks, was hidden deep in the hole between the ivory wooden cupboards in our pantry. She had bolted without even acknowledging the source of Twinkle’s fright, and I had sped after her. I’d liken it to Wile E Coyote and the Roadrunner. I followed her blindly and hurt myself. She got away. After half my arm was immersed in cobwebs, my mom came in and gave me that questioning look parents learn to perfect.

“Sparkle hiding again?”

“Yeah,” I had said, pulling my arm out from the wall and brushing dust from it. “Are we ready to leave yet?”

“Not quite. Probably ‘bout an hour or two from now. You and Noelle should start saying goodbye.”

“Okay.”

As much as I would miss the neighborhood and my friends, I wasn’t really concerned with how much I’d miss the house itself, but I agreed anyway, trying to create as little stress as possible.

Noelle and I started out in the living room. Christmas parties, birthdays, and anniversaries were the only excitement this room had seen. Champagne corks were popped, wrapping paper littered the tan rug, and shaky notes joined with my grandmother’s piano in caroling seasonal melodies. Our parlor, used to entertain guests and nothing more.

We skipped through the dining room. The burgundy walls played back memories of steaming mashed potatoes and a glistening honey-roasted ham. The cherry floorboards bared scars and stains from bright dyes and sharp baskets.

Around the corner, carpet sprouted from steps leading to my mom’s office and my brother and sister’s bedrooms. Mom’s office was where Noelle and I would watch *Winnie The Pooh* and *Scooby Doo*. While the family room was used for family movies and current shows, we preferred to watch our childhood classics laying with our stomachs facing the shaggy carpet. Among different shades of white, there was a light green dresser where we kept our toys. Joined to her office was the bathroom where I’d decided to give Noelle a haircut, and not a good one. The lecture I received was jam-packed with disbelief, frustration, and anger.

My older half-siblings Kim and Kyle shared the floor with my mom. Most years, the doors stayed closed, and dust would collect, but sometimes I snuck in and pulled out Kim’s collection of plastic goo-dripping toys or Kyle’s board games. We looked through the door, and thinking about the emptiness, I realized their rooms had always felt cold to me. It was like there was something off, something missing. Today that mood had engulfed our family.

We passed over the kitchen to the family room. Everything that made this room wonderful was outside by the curb ready to be locked up for six hours. The shabby, floral sofa and matching chairs were no longer resting on the giant rug where I first watched *The Ghost and Mr. Chicken* and *The Time Machine*. This was the room where we displayed our Christmas tree, held family game night, and enjoyed overly-cheesy popcorn. The giant ceilings, held up by uncovered oak beams, were usually strung with white fairy lights, but not today. Today, the lights were buried in a brown box, sitting on the curb.

Next, came Dad’s office. Located on the second floor, my dad’s office was easily my favorite room in the entire house. Every inch of the floor was covered with an inch-deep carpet, and on the outer two-thirds of the room, there was a foot-tall step leading to the windows. The windows, each tucked back into a different part of the smooth, white wall, looked out over the yard one way and our garden the other. My dad had a recording table in one corner of the room where we would dance to “American Pie,” and I would practice my skills as the world’s worst D.J..

We continued on downstairs, stopping at our respective bedrooms across the hall from each other. My baby pink walls sat punctured from the pins that held up my fairy dolls. It felt extremely empty. The emotion finally washed over me, and several tears escaped the corner of my eye. This wouldn’t be my bedroom anymore.

Noelle peeked her head into my room. “Let’s go.”

She was ready. I was not.

Mom and Dad’s grand bedroom, complete with a fireplace, a walk-in closet, and a giant bathtub, was at the end of the hallway. Noelle and I disturbed the silence one final time, but now there was no “*Shhh!*” being hissed from underneath blankets.

Our final stop was the backyard. Just a few years earlier, Dad had splurged on getting a mini-court to go with our basketball hoop. That green asphalt top witnessed hundreds of games of H-O-R-S-E, but few times had it witnessed my victory. Grass licked our heels as we ran around the other side of the house to our garden. Mount Wasson, our homemade waterfall, had been switched off. The strawberry plants were shriveled and brown. We paid our final respects to our deceased lizards by their graves: Two steps left from the bare apple tree.

We dragged ourselves through the tall, white gate that blocked us from the road, toward the monstrous, yellow truck that would take us away from it. Noelle ran ahead as I pulled the door toward me, waiting for it to click. I kept my head low, raising it only when I heard Mom closing the front door for the final time.

I joined Dad and Noelle on the cobblestone walkway by the eucalyptuses. Mom joined us, and Dad put his arm around her. The sun beat down on us as we all stared at that house: Olive and brick on the outside, with dozens of colorful plants growing freely around it. A beautiful, marvelous, and magnificent childhood home. Mom sighed. We were ready.

Dad pulled a rope, closing both the door to the back and the door to a grand era.