**This Old House**

It was the start of November when we pulled up the massive orange and white U-haul to our new abode. It was another chance for me to take in this new edifice, this new place that would be my home for the next fifty years. The house was a two story classic Victorian with lots of long, slim, tall windows and an over abundance of doors and porches (four doors, three porches to be exact!).

When I stepped out into the brisk, fall air I could smell the damp leaves and earth. They crunched beneath my tennis shoes. I gazed up at the house. The structure was mainly a dull blue with accents of white and sometimes pink (I hate pink) in the trim-work. There were extensive gingerbread details on the roof and porches, including diamond shapes and swirls that remind me of a fairy tale. The house’s shining moment was the copula—it was a mini-tower with four small windows on the second floor and was a small room you could hide away in if you wanted to. I looked up with both feelings of both awe and dread. While it looked beautiful from a distance, up close it was a flaky, neglected mess. The paint was dulling, the porches sagging and most of the windows had jagged spider-web like scatters of glass.

*What have we gotten ourselves into?* I thought.

The house and I did not become instant friends. We had a hate-hate relationship early on. I especially despised the place that first winter we were there. That winter was cold, and the snow didn’t help, especially because the house had no insulation—I could feel the heat escaping through the walls. There were other issues as well, but the one that irked me the most was everywhere: the wallpaper. It was even on the ceiling and boy was it ugly. **U-g-l-y.** Each room had a version of it—it was pastel pink and green with large, obnoxious flowers. It was old-ladies-gone-wild in decorating. I am not a pastel kind of gal, so the frilly flowers and heinous colors clashed horribly with my furniture and décor—which was mostly bold rich colors (like orange and red) and dark wood.

The worse part had to be the nights I slept there alone. My husband—John—worked 7p-7a at the hospital in Battle Creek, so it was just me and my pathetic cat holding down the fort. El Diablo—or Debers for short—was my sable colored cat and he was just as skittish as me. At night, I swear, the shadows began to move, or maybe it was the atrocious wallpaper. I heard noises. It took me almost a month to get to use to the sound of the furnace kicking on. I was really jumpy. Plus I thought we had a ghost, or maybe some creepy creeper was going to break in (most of our doors had broken locks) and kidnap me or the cat. Needless to say, I didn’t sleep well.

I got more and more acquainted with my house as the first year we were there past. The following year we were able to start working on parts of the house that needed immediate attention: the windows that wouldn’t open, the broken doors, and the really ugly green and pink (of course pastel) fireplace. Our top priority was new windows. We had spent the summer as rotisserie chickens because we quickly learned the windows wouldn’t open—they were painted shut. We also learned our electrical was so old it couldn’t support a window air conditioner. We sweated out most of that first summer. However, about $15,000 dollars later we had all brand new windows, windows that opened. Next, we turned our attention to the doors. We also replaced them so each one locked; that alleviated my creepy-creeper fears. But the real glory was when John began scrapping the fireplace. After several layers of paint: pink, green, brown, and black, we saw something extraordinary.

*Green Marble.* We looked closely and saw a deep emerald color with swirls of gray and white; it was cool to the touch and revealed how much time, money, and attention was put into our home when it was first build over 100 years ago. It was beautiful. Who would have thought that beneath this awful paint was something so stunning?

It has been three years now and I’ve come to realize my house is like a treasure hunt. We are constantly discovering new details and restoring our old home’s true character. I was quick to judge—quick to see only the flaky paint and floral monsters on the wall, but there is beauty underneath it all. It is just going to take time. I’m not a patient person, but those moments: the green marble of the fireplace, the real crystal of our chandelier, the intricate brass work on our door hinges are absolutely worth it. I just need wait for those moments and see what other treasures are in store.