

PROMOTION

I sit at the picture window with my chin cupped in my hands, waiting for my father to get home from work. Mom yells in from the kitchen, "Can you see him?"

"Not yet," I tell her, scanning up and down the street for his yellow Cadillac.

"Then there's still time," she says impatiently and runs down to the basement. She reappears a short time later hauling up the old Electrolux vacuum cleaner, a broom and an oversized dust pan. "Where's your sister," she says, breathless.

"Outside playing," I tell her. My mom heaves a thankful sigh and disappears back into the kitchen and, presumably, dinner. I press my face to the glass and spot my dad's car coming up the street, slow as ever. "He's here mom," I yell excitedly.

"All right then," she says.

A few moments later I hear my dad open the side door and announce his arrival, "Honey I'm home. Boy am I beat!" I mouth the words with him and run out into the kitchen to greet him, grabbing the broom and dust pan as I do. "Hi son," he says quietly, sensitive to the fact that I am somewhat embarrassed by a dad who, underneath the tailored suite, is a crumbling gingerbread cookie.

"How you doing, pop?" I say brightly, even though inside I can't decide whether to laugh like a fool or cry my eyes out.

"Fine son, fine," he says setting his briefcase down; several cookie finger stay with it, wrapped around the leather handle. I swing into action with broom and pan and sweep it away before he notices. He shuffles over to my mom and kisses her. She does her best to ignore that a good portion of the left side of his face disappeared in that kiss, forming a handsome gingerbread crumb pile beneath their feet.

"How was your day, dear," my mom asks as if nothing unusual has happened.

"Oh the usual," my dad says, "crazy as ever". He brushes back a rogue lock of hair; it snaps off like dried twigs. His ear flakes off and falls behind him. My mom switches on the Electrolux and quickly sucks it up.

"Now you just go and relax in the den," she tells him, "while I finish dinner."

I follow after my dad as he heads slowly to the den and sweep up the trail of crumbs behind him as best I can. He sits down in front of the TV and stares at the black screen for a few moments as if hoping it will magically turn itself on. When it doesn't he leans forward and punches the "on" button, crumbling what little remains of his right hand. He sits back down, hardly noticing the curious and sudden lack of digits. I sweep the remains into my trusty dust pan, digging a few stubborn crumbs out of the rug. My father sighs and says, "So how was school today, Donnie?" His chin falls into neat pieces into his lap. He looks down at the somewhat comical site and his head snaps off. It takes a good bounce off the couch, rolls onto the floor and under the TV leaving crumbling bits of cookie face behind.

I call out to my mother in a mild panic, “He’s falling apart again.”

She runs out with an oversized mixing bowl filled with the gingerbread remains of my poor father. I look up to her anxious face for some sort of reassurance. “It’s this big new job of his...” she says shaking her head. She carefully picks up his head and lovingly crumbles the remains into the mixing bowl as one might crumble stale bread for stuffing. “... has him falling all to pieces.”

All that’s left of my dad is a pile of fist-sized pieces surrounded by an empty business suite. My sister runs in and stands quietly aside, watching with gleeful innocence as my mom and I gather what remains of my dad into the mixing bowl.

“Come on kids,” my mom says heading out to the kitchen, “we’ll put your father back together after dinner.”

“Goody!” says my sister running after her. “Can I lick the bowl?”