

House of Firsts

She smelled of scented candles and freshly applied hair spray. Her nails were always perfect. She and my mom walked every morning before I was even up. She lived next door, with her daughter, husband, and their dog Ollie. My best friend lived across the street. She had long brown hair and was always taller than me. Her hands were constantly coated in sap. Around the corner, in a two-story tan house lived my sisters' best friends. They had matching blue scooters and different Gap t-shirts for every holiday. The lady with the tall, glass vases and purple feet lived on the other side of us. She said she had grandchildren. I never saw them. A few doors down, the women with all of the dogs. These were the people that surrounded our little white house. Proximity, making us all friends.

My entire life was on one street. My dad had gotten down on one knee in front of the fireplace where, years later, I took my first steps. The same fireplace my grandparents read next to years before. My little pink room provided me with a quick dash to my parents to tell them about my bad dreams. It was there that my sisters and I received our first Emmys for best actress and where I first discovered my fear of snakes. I gained my love for Jazz music and Lucky Charms in that house. It was where I got my first soccer ball and lost my first tooth. The entryway smelled of smoke and burnt marshmallows after every fire. We hosted many Scooby-Doo, Hanna Montana, and Pink Princess birthday parties at 910. Many fights over the TV remote still hang in the high ceilings, and the screams of the first sight of our Christmas presents overwhelmed the small family room. The sand from the red, crab-shaped sandbox was spread throughout the house and in the cracks of the cement in the backyard. I can still hear the lizard doorbell buzz. The little tree in the front shaded us from the real world and stood as a safe zone for years. It was there that my sisters would race to their favorite swings, leaving me with the leftovers. I learned how to ride my bike on the bumpy, steep driveway. It was our little house of firsts.

She still smells of scented candles and freshly applied hair spray. Not only preserving the shape of her hair but also her perfect nails. She lives next to the little white house with her husband and their

dog Ollie. My best friend moved away. She has short blonde hair now and is much shorter than me. Her hands are no longer sticky with pine sap, instead, they stick to her phone screen. Around the corner, the girls in the two-story grey house no longer ride matching scooters. Instead, they both hold a smokey odor. They had an estate sale for the lady with the purple feet. Her glass vases, laid out in the lawn, filled with sunlight as my mom told me she just couldn't get enough oxygen. We finally saw her grandchildren. A few doors down, the lady with all of the dogs. These are the people that surround the little white house on Oakmere Place. Proximity, trumped by time.

As I walk through our old house, I notice the changes the new family has made. They have made it their own, painted over our house of firsts. I get lost in its newness. My little pink room is blue now. We aren't the actresses on the living room stage anymore. The orange lights in the dining room have been replaced, and the kitchen no longer smells of chicken strips and chocolate milk. The sand has been cleaned up. The brown carpet in the family room is gone along with the paths we each took to get to the taupe couch. I have visited during dinner noticing that Jazz doesn't play anymore. They painted our fireplace. The swings go untouched most of the year, and the safe zone hasn't been used since our last game of Red Alert. Now, the house is filled with first-time drivers and a new couch. They have a dog. We never had a dog. It is there that they used the hot tub for the first time and where their first boat was docked. They have built up twelve years of new scratch marks on the light hardwood floors and their fur rugs and velvet couches don't compare to what was there before. And, after I visit the house more and more, I still remember that little house of firsts that I grew up in. It's a different house now. It's their little house of firsts. And I am okay with that.

This is where we revisit and share with those who are experiencing it for the first time. We recount all of the snow forts, lost teeth, and birthdays. All of the first sleepovers, first soccer games, first fights, and first days of school. We have moved on to a new house of firsts. First jobs, first college acceptances, first graduations, first boyfriends. Time forced us to grow up but it didn't stop us from

growing. Each new experience harks back to a time when my firsts felt larger than life. Where proximity signified importance. Now I take on each new first, thankful for the house that held my world.