

## **"House for Sale" by Claudia Beechman**

Our house sold in four days. We've called it home for twenty years. My husband and I raised our two sons here. "I'm going to live here for the rest of my life!" declared our younger son, Reid, when he was five.

The house sits at the top of a dead-end street with a southern view of our neighbors' sylvan back yard. At this time of year, ash leaves and hawthorne berries litter the brick patio that my husband built. The rain-soaked earth exudes the aroma of plums. The ground is thick with glistening ivy and pachysandra.

I know that I shall miss this earthly paradise.

We've lived through two kitchen renovations, the first one done on a shoestring. Out went the '60s era Sears stove that intruded halfway into the room. My husband tore up the green, brick-patterned vinyl floor. He removed the wall-mounted cast-iron sink. When we got word that my sister-in-law was redoing her kitchen in upstate New York, my husband rented a big station wagon and came back with a trunk full of cabinets for recycling. He removed the medallion-like pulls, replaced them with brass knobs and repainted the doors. The ugly, dark brown masonite wallcovering was replaced by a small-patterned paper on a cream-colored ground after hours of preparation.

The black scalloped "crown molding" had long been removed. We found a modern white ceiling fixture and hung it over the round dining table. It was, after all, an eat-in kitchen, especially as the fourth member of the family was still in utero.

The floors of the two front rooms, which were grimy with dirt, had been sanded and finished before we moved in. The honey-colored yellow pine floor shone like jewels in the sunlight streaming in from the south-facing window. The same green brick-patterned vinyl that had covered the kitchen floor continued into the dining room.

"Why don't we take a look and see what's underneath?" asked Mr. Davis, our floor man. I'll never forget him tearing up a section of the vinyl, yanking at some red felt, and declaring, "You've got a yellow pine floor under there!" We felt like we had discovered buried treasure.

My husband moved the multitude of hostas that had been withering in the sun and transplanted them to the shady back yard where they have thrived every year, notwithstanding a few bites from the deer that roam the suburbs. We planted Red Emperor and Arctic White tulip bulbs in the front of the house in spring and red and white impatiens in summer.

We forged friendships with our neighbors who were friendly, artistic and invariably handy. They all had stories about nightmare renovations.

Ironically, after the boys moved out, we found ourselves with a need for more space.

Desk space. Storage space. A garage (a luxury on our street). I

long for a woodburning fireplace and there is no way to add one. There are more vehicles than people on the narrow little street.

We know why we want to move but the little yellow sign is still disconcerting. "Sale pending" it reads. Heart- breaking.

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