

The Sale

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In the kitchen, she poured a drink and looked out the bay windows at her neighbor across the street. The man was struggling all morning, trying to prepare for what she assumed was a yard sale. He had been assembling a bed in his front yard for the better part of the morning. A bureau, coffee table, and several lamps also found their way out the front door and down the porch steps. Left foot, right foot. Up and down. She thought about the situation as she blew on her coffee. She wondered how much he could possibly have left inside of his small split level. She had wondered what was going to become of him now that his wife was gone. She and her husband used to be friendly with the man and woman who lived across the street, getting together occasionally to play Boggle or exchange gifts at holidays. But he didn't come around anymore since he had been on his own. In fact, he had been so withdrawn he didn't seem to come outside for anything, unless it was to go to the store for whiskey, beer, or bread. But now he was moving again. He continued going in and out, in and out, until the yard was filling up nicely. The couch, television, and end tables paired nicely with the shaggy green carpet of the front lawn, and the sharp edges of the desk and kitchen table looked natural on the grey concrete driveway. He took much care in the arrangement of his articles and once everything was in place, he began running the wires. After he ran his extension cords and connected everything, it was as if he had not moved his furniture at all, but maybe instead, his house had been moved back one hundred feet or so, and his belongings had stayed in place. She often thought about going over to talk to him but decided to keep her distance. So did the rest of the neighborhood.

After dinner she and her husband sat outside on the porch. He read the paper and smoked a pipe. She sat and watched. Two teenagers were walking down the street holding hands. Those little things, she thought to herself; and she remembered vaguely what it was like to be young.

“Remember when we were like that?”

said the woman.

“Ehh?” said the man, setting down the paper and looking over the tops of his glasses at his wife.

“Those kids, look at ‘em. They can't be but 19 or 20,” she said, “Looks like their going to check out the sale.” (...)