

Division

Ella sat at the top of the stairs willing her mind to commit the details to memory. She knew they would fade to buzzing smoke when she tried to remember them later, but she listened hard anyway.

“Maybe you should’ve thought about the kids before you called her” Mom bit out somewhere not in between a scream and a whisper but both at once.

“I told you I was sorry and I told you it meant nothing. I care about this family and I want to make this work. That’s all I can do, you either forgive me and we move on or you’re done” said Dad, his voice transitioning from angry and wet to a sweet calm like he remembered he was the one in the wrong.

“Then I guess I’m done”

She didn’t understand the conversation, but hot tears slid onto the math homework in her lap anyway. She hated division. She had a feeling it was related to this somehow.



Ella didn’t like the way the house looked when it was empty. Surely the walls weren’t always so brown. She could’ve sworn her room was blue and pink and her brother’s was red, but maybe that was just them, their stuff. This was really just a house without them. Anyone could live in these same rooms with these same walls and it would start to look different. Maybe her room would become purple, or orange to the next person, but the walls would still be the same walls, beige and wholly untouched by the years they lived there the second they were gone.



Her dad’s new apartment had too much carpet. Ella liked hardwoods in the bedroom with a rug to make it cozy. The carpet under the door and creeping all the way to the borders of the room felt wrong. It makes her feel itchy inside even though the carpet itself is soft and she never liked her feet being cold. She would still prefer hardwood. The water pressure was also too light. I never really feel clean here. Mom’s townhouse had great water pressure, but the sink makes a sputtering sound that forced me to wonder how safe it is to drink. Our house had perfect water pressure and good sinks.



Dad is quiet now. He was the type to show us silly videos and throw us off the pool's edge into the deep end, but now he eats dinner staring at his plate. Ella and her brother, Eli, are devising a plan to see his eyes light up again. They want to cook him breakfast tomorrow. He always liked the effort that went into his kids trying to use big appliances regardless of the taste of the outcome.



Mom seems happy. This is a good thing. This is a good thing. It's good that she looks happier without Dad, right?



It's been a while. Things are calm. The two halves have grown back into two full pieces. Neither is quite the same as the whole we started with.