

Kyte Spyte

with Lindsay Kyte



I have already written about my new apartment. It was a darn long and limb-numbing search to find it, but I did, and I love it. But, a couple of weeks ago, I saw my lovely abode through new, more critical eyes-- you guessed it, my parents came to visit.

Why is it, even though I am twenty-one, graduating, and have not lived at home for four years now, my parents think that they are the real tenants of every place in which I reside?

My mom, the grade-five teacher (trust me, that is significant), entered first, opening her blinking eyes wide and pursing her lips in a fake, teacher-ish smile, "O-o-ooh?!!! This is... interesting." My heart sank, as I followed her eyes and read the inescapable thoughts flashing through her mind: "This place needs thousands upon thousands of stupid little doilies."

Mom then proceeded to do her "mom things," much to my annoyance. Luckily, my years on this planet have taught me to let her do what she wants now, and re-arrange it the way I want it later (actually, Dad told me this).

First, she organized my kitchen cupboards, opening all of the boxes and organizing individual packages in what I perceived to be alphabetical order in tupperware containers. She conveniently arranged things so that I could no longer reach nor find anything ever again. Then she filled any remaining space with food my sister likes and I do not. She also questioned me throughout this process as to why I had not eaten the food she had brought over on her last visit, which was, of course, food that my sister likes and I do not.

I knew Dad would be a while, as he had to scour the neighbourhood for criminal looking types and interview the landlord. I heard him coming up the stairs, and jingling

the door knob. I unlocked the door, and left him to play with the locks, as I knew he would, testing and re-testing them. I then heard the clang of a tool box, and knew he had come to the inevitable decision that I definitely needed a few more dead bolts installed. I do, after all, live in downtown Charlottetown.

Mom is now in the living room, strategically placing little pots of potpourri in places where I will surely knock them over. I hear her murmuring, and I know she is making my apartment into a story for the Teachers.

Ah, the Teachers. Their name must be spelled with a capital as they rule my life. Whatever their kids are doing, Mom thinks I should also do. Luckily for me, though, they get a giggle over their tea cups about Mrs. Kyte's "artsy" daughter, as I do pursue my creative endeavours solely for their recess amusement.

So Mom is now rehearsing her humorous anecdotes about my apartment to be added to her repertoire of "my oldest daughter, Lindsay" stories. I strain, and nod when I hear her use the term "vintage apartment," which is what the teachers will call it evermore. I wait for, and hear, the planned giggle afterwards. I am never disappointed.

Dad has another word for my apartment, and that is "fire trap." He makes me lock and unlock the fire escape door hundreds of times, then proclaims that I will never, in the event of a fire, be able to reach that same lock I just unlocked hundreds of times. I'm assuming he believes that extreme heat makes me shrink three feet.

He walks into the living room (Mom has moved on to my bedroom by now) and nearly has a breakdown over the plastic doilies covering the large silver radiators that "I" had put there (I wonder which

teacher's kid has the fetish for plastic doilies). I know Mom will exclaim her distress over "my" removing them when she returns, and I roll my eyes to the ceiling. Unfortunately, so does Dad, and he declares that I don't have nearly enough smoke alarms for one person. Coincidentally, he's just bought fourteen at Canadian Tire, so he sets about installing them.

While Mom does like that I provide her with quirky conversation over teacher tea, she hates my "habit" of buying vintage clothing. She is now hiding the pieces which offend her the most, and replacing them with clothing she has bought on the premise of its being "in style." Dad gets his two cents in on fashion also, giving me the practical advice that every pair of shoes I own with even a slight heel should be tossed out, as there are "twenty-nine steep steps" I could fall down (oh, yes, he's counted).

Unfortunately for me, Mom's idea of haute couture is constituted of what every girl in her grade-five class covets for its glitter and glamour. This means that I will be trotting down those same treacherous steps while pulling down my leopard-print skirt and trying not to kill myself on Spice-girl platforms come Monday morning.

After Dad has run every tap in the place, and failed to find a way in which these could also catch fire, and Mom has made every room look like something Martha Stewart has thrown up floral patterns on, they are finally satisfied, and we go out to the restaurant of my choice (and I know which one *not* to go to). I don't eat too much when I'm out, though, as I know I have a big box of my sister's favourite instant garlic mashed potatoes waiting for me at home, on a shelf I cannot possibly reach, in an apartment that requires more keys to get into than I now have smoke alarms.

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