

The Kitchen

The cupboard doors are silky oak and the contents are clearly displayed behind the polished glass. Next to the stove, sharpened knives are ready for use in a wooden knife block. Dark vinyl shines warmly, reflecting the fire close by. The wood breadboard decorated with neatly painted purple flowers sits on the richly stained benches and compliments the overall feeling of warmth. On the benches, jars of spices and herbs are scattered, and bunches of drying garlic and lavender hang from the ceiling. The wood fire adjacent slowly burns splinters of ironbark, warming the entire kitchen. Orange china vases hold freshly cut, red, blue and purple roses which perfume the room. The cooling oven and stove hint their recent use. Early morning light shines onto the ornaments as they observe the kitchen from the windowsill. Bowls of fresh fruit and bright yellow curtains freshen and colour the room. Beneath the window freshly washed dishes sparkle in the draining rack beside the sink. Mountains of muffins lay enticingly in a woven basket on the bench.

They sat up to the kitchen bench on the three stools. On cold rainy days they would have chicken and vegetable soup, not the smooth stuff you buy, but the rich homemade kind with chunks of vegetables. The fire would warm them through. They would be sitting, watching, knowing that all was well. The soup would melt away their troubles and the kitchen was there. The kitchen would be a part of it all. It was a part of everything they knew and then it started to change. Little by little the glass cupboard doors began to cloud. Over time the herbs were put away. The room was losing its fruitful aroma.

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“It was a Tuesday morning. The fire had been extinguished for days now. The flowers were wilted; brown petals were scattered on the table. I could see them fall to the ground from my desk. Mum had already gone to work. I was doing homework for school when the sound of the bus in the street behind told me that it was time to go. I passed through the kitchen to the front door and saw that the cupboard doors had changed. They were now completely blocked with silver metal. New, cold, silver handles discouraged their opening. I didn’t know how they could have been changed. There was no time. Ornaments had also been cleared from the benches.

“As the bus drove past the house I noticed that the kitchen curtains were drawn. I had never seen them drawn before. I then became nervous, ready to face the music of uncompleted homework.

“I’d been in trouble lately. Assignments and study were becoming overwhelming and my job was exhausting and very invasive. I’d have talked to Mum or Dad about it but they were never available. Usually I’d go to the Sanctuary Avenue Park after school and sit to enjoy the ambience. Hundreds of birds would often fly in at dusk. The lake was large and on this day the wind was cold, fast and dry. The tall gum trees swayed in the wind, producing a reassuring rustle. The constant lapping of waves against the shore of

the lake provided comfort. The playground was empty, children obviously at home, so I sat, gently rocking on a swing. I felt safe knowing that under pressure the chains would never break.

“There’s something eerie about being out after dark. The streets are empty. There are no cars or people. As I walked I would see families safe in their warm houses. Usually when I arrived home Mum hadn’t yet left the office so sometimes I’d cook her tea.

“I had loosened my unironed white shirt and unbuttoned my blazer already. I walked into the entry of the house. I dropped my port and Adelaide Crows cap. As I searched my bag for the key I noticed that the curtains in the kitchen had been changed. Now a blue and green horizontal blind on the window hid the warm kitchen inside. The key turned in the lock.

“I didn’t think it was the right house. New cream carpet had been laid. Dark blue couches shone; reflecting the white lights above. I moved into the kitchen. A large metal range hood curved into the pale cream ceiling. White light spilled onto the teal, lustrous benches from the lights above. On the table a clear vase held a lone white lily. The sink and metal draining rack were clean. New steal appliances bored the room with lack of character. Hard white tiles smothered the wood floorboards beneath. It had completely changed, the kitchen where I had grown up. That kitchen was my life, my family. That kitchen was me.”

The young man broke into a rage.

“Good Matt. Let it out,” said the woman behind the desk both relieved and frightened, “it’s all part of the healing process.”