Dust spiraled through the air. It had been kicked up in the cleaning and now it looked golden in the afternoon light. Boxes were piled high in the living room. The towers so high that they if they fell it would take them a long time to crash down on Lyddia's head. She was dressed in the clothes that she reserved for yard work. They were paint spattered and the right elbow was torn. Her hair was pulled up behind a bandana and on her brow there were dust tracks left behind from a day of sweating.

It was the second day of packing. The U-haul had been filled and emptied repeatedly but still the house seemed so full. The years of clutter collected was matched only by the memories. As Lyddia and Ryan filled boxes it seemed like every other object had a remember-when attached to it. It was macabrely fun boxing up their childhood home. Like ripping apart their old baby albums and keeping only the good photos. They got to remember every moment they spent in that house but only needed to dwell on the good ones.

But after two days it was getting old. The boxes needing filling and the remember-whens only slowed the packing. They were making progress though. The first day had been spent upstairs emptying their childhood rooms, which had been transformed in their absences into craft rooms and offices. They moaned and complained about the injustice of it all and they were secretly delighted to restore the rooms to bare walls.

The second day was more focused on the ground floor. The living room, the dinning room, the kitchen. All the stuff that they had in their own homes. All the stuff that they didn't need. What was one supposed to do with an extra toaster? Mixing bowls? Tupperware? It was easy sending these things to the dump, they had no memories of the individual forks and knives. But now those three rooms stood empty except for the big furniture, like the couches and bookshelves, and the giant pile of boxes.

Lyddia let herself slump into one of the couch, the comfy one with a slump in the center. The one that she and her brother used to curl up on for their bedtime story. When Ryan came back with the empty U-haul she would share that remember-when. She pulled her feet beneath her, trying to go back in time to

those nights as children. Each of them snuggled on their end of the couch with her mother in-between them. A blanket thrown over top. Their mother would read for what felt like hours, until dad final came in and called it a night. More often than not they would pretend to be sleeping and he would throw them over his shoulders, moaning about his bad knees, and cary them up the stairs and into bed. Those were good nights.

The squeal of breaks in the driveway broke Lyddia from her reverie and announced that Ryan was back for the next load to the dump. She didn't want to, but she got to her feet and walked into the living room. Maybe they should take some of the furniture this time. It would be the last load of the evening and it would be nice to have some more space for boxes.

She bent down to try and shift the bookcase away from the wall when she noticed something sticking out from underneath it. An old paperback, it's pages yellowed and dust thick across its cover. It had probably been down there for years. Lyddia blew the dust away. *Who's Afraid of Virginia Wolfe?* Tears sprang to her eyes.

"Sis, I'm home!" Ryan came through the front door but he only made it a few steps, coming to a stop when he saw his sister crouching by the bookcase, sobbing. Slowly he made his way across the half-empty room. He sat next to her and put an arm around her shoulder. He let her cry.

When she was all dried out Lyddia spoke, her voice coming out in choking gasps, "Do you remember story time? On the big couch. We would nestle next to mom and afterwards dad would cary us upstairs."

"I remember," Ryan said, a smile from the past spring to his lips. "Dad would always pretend about his knees."

Lyddia nodded, racked by another sob. "Do you remember afterward? When they thought we were asleep?"

Ryan's face fell a little, "Lyddia…"

"When I read this in college I thought of them," she held out the play for him to read the title. "I know it's not something you want to think about but I did. I couldn't help it. All I could think about were the screams, the yelling…they were

like two different people, before we went to bed and after. And when they would have parties…" Lyddia shuddered.

"Don't think about it," Ryan said removing his arm from her shoulders. "They were good parents."

"But were they good people? Did they actually love each other? Or us even?"

"We never saw that side of them—"

"But we heard it. Locked away in our rooms we heard their games. We heard their noises. Maybe it would have been better if they had never had us."

Ryan just stared at his sister. "How can you say that?"

Tears began pouring from Lyddia again, "I don't know okay. I don't know. Sometimes I thought we were just an experiment gone wrong."

Ryan was silent.

"It just never made sense," Lyddia said through sobs. "I used to pretend they were monsters under my bed. It was easier for me to sleep that way. I could pretend that they weren't real. That the screams and shouting from the floorboards was all in my head. It was easier to think that I was crazy."

Ryan shifted away form her.

"Don't tell me you didn't. Please don't tell me that I was the only one who heard them."

Ryan stood up, "I think we should call it a night sis."

She grabbed his pant leg as he took a step away, "Please don't tell me I'm crazy."

There was silence in the room except for Lyddia's sobs. Eventually Ryan stepped away from the bookcase. Lyddia let him go. "They were good parents Lyd, that's all that matters."

He strode from the room, blaming the front door behind him. After a few minutes Lyddia heard the ending of the U-haul start up and then drive away. Lyddia lay sobbing on the living room floor, staring out at the house that held so many memories. The dust no longer shone gold in the sunlight, it just looked like the dirt it was.