

The Floor Beneath Me

Moving out from the nest for the first time can be a very trying experience. What some people might forget to think about is that moving out of one's first apartment or dorm can also have its psychological impacts.

As I sit on the floor in the middle of the living room that is no longer mine, I reflect on that idea. There is something special about living alone for the first time and being able to look at everything and say that it's *mine*. That kitchen is that way because *I* moved things there. The bathroom is organized that way because of *me*.

The floor directly beneath me smells like carpet cleaner and the air radiates of Lysol. I remember those same smells when I first moved in and the apartment needed a good cleaning before I could lay my things to rest.

There may have been a perfectly good reason for this move and a good alternative to the apartment in store, but there is no stopping the feelings that I have for this experience. I never even went outside on the patio much, but, like the rest of the apartment, it was mine and I could have gone out there if I chose to. This patio, however, is no longer mine to experience.

In place of the clean carpets and single bedroom, a two bedroom house with no rent lies in the distance. But with this house come red and brown carpet, pink window covers, a purple toilet, and ancient appliances.

I have no choice over the carpet, the location, and the appliances. If only my financial situation would allow it, I would not have been leaving the apartment. The apartment was my partner; it housed me, and I took care of it.

This place, even though it's an inanimate object, taught me some valuable lessons and went through some things with me that I had never been through. Learning how to deal with

Mrs. Godzilla in the apartment upstairs was not necessarily the most diverting experience, but it taught me patience and how to deal with neighbors (ear plugs, anyone?). And there is something special about being snowed in all alone and experiencing one of the city's worst snow falls this way. Being in this apartment also taught me the value of following the community rules and making sure that everyone else did the same (I'm sure Mrs. Godzilla isn't going to be illegally parking in the handicap spot anymore).

Walking into the bedroom, I gaze lovingly at the first set of curtains that I ever installed. They will have to leave with me, but when they go back up in my new home, they will carry a piece of the apartment with them. When I put them up, I will not be doing so as an innocent, non-power-drill owning apartment dweller. Instead, I will be putting them up with a sense of experience and with all the right tools at my disposal, both material and cognitive.

As with the curtains, my kitchen items will leave with their own experiences. No longer am I moving from one place to another with nothing to cook with and no bowls, cups, or utensils. I am leaving this place with these items that also have their stories to tell. Even in the new house, I will remember the fourth bowl in the set that managed to jump from my grasp and shatter to pieces. There are no more thoughts of what I will need to make sure I can have a decent home; I have those things, both material and cognitive.

But even though the dishes, pans, curtains, furniture, and everything else will go with me, the experiences at the new house will not be the same. There are new experiences to be had and a house to call my very own. Gone are the days of the coin laundry and fighting for one single washer and dryer when the other people doing laundry are each using two. Gone is walking down to the leasing office each month and writing a check for rent. And better yet, gone is having to fight other people for a parking space that was assigned to me.

Before turning around to give the apartment another glance, I look down at a corner in the dining area and smile at a picture that still needs to be taken down. This and all the other pictures and posters gazed down at me during my time here and watched as I struggled or fought through new experiences. They saw me assemble my first vacuum cleaner. They watched as I suckered my boyfriend into laying on the living room floor and eating chips and salsa while watching *Tristan and Isolde*.

But those items will leave with me and reappear in a new environment to fulfill the same tasks. The pictures will continue to watch, only now they will see new experiences and witness how the old ones affect the new (after all, only now do I know that a power drill can be more effective than a Phillips or flat-head).

As I finish cleaning and taking nails out of the walls, I reflect on how I will soon be doing the reverse and putting nails into walls. With this move, there is a houseful of opportunity waiting. There is painting to be done, pictures to hang, and furniture to place. Only this time, I will be wiser, more experienced, and ready.