

14 *Black Birch Lane*

SHAINA PROCOPIO

As I pull onto my road I pray that She is not home; my heart sinks into my stomach when I see her white caravan parked in my driveway. I want to turn around and get as far away from her as possible, but I suck it up and prepare myself to go straight to my room and wait for my dad to get home from work. As I walk in the door I can hear her high squeaky voice talking to someone on the phone. I try to shut the door quietly so I don't have to talk to her.

"Shaina, is that you?" she says in that Fran Drescher voice.

"Yeah," I respond and quickly run up the stairs and shut the door to my room.

I sit on my bed and pull the down comforter over my head. I take in a deep breath and the smell of down feathers. My head hurts as I sit there with so many thoughts going through my head. *Why does this have to happen to me, what have I done wrong? I just want my mom back. I want a normal family and I just want to feel comfortable in MY house.* It's only four in the afternoon and I have no will power to get up and do my homework or five loads of laundry. I stay under my down comforter and start to fall asleep. I am only in a light sleep, but this is when I dream the most, especially about the way things used to be.

As I walked up the driveway and onto the sidewalk that hadn't been shoveled, snow was filling my shoes. We had just moved in a few months before that and we were still adding the final touches. The winter air was crisp and cold, making my cheeks and nose turn red and rosy. "Mom, I'm home!" I yelled as I came inside, my jacket half zipped, no hat or mittens on and snowflakes coating my head.

She stood there in her pink robe and said, "Shaina Marie, what do you think you are doing?! I thought I told you to stay bundled up."

I looked at her and gave a glare, "I was only getting off the bus." She laughed and pulled me into her arms, trying to get me warm. I brought my head closer to her chest and embraced the smell of her Lancome perfume and body wash. Like always, we make a cup of hot cocoa and sit on the couch to watch Oprah.

The dream is over and I'm back to reality. No Oprah or someone looking out for me. No smell of my mom's perfume, or sitting on the couch sipping hot cocoa. Now

it's Dr. Phil, which I don't enjoy watching, the smell of Victoria's Secret perfume, Angel, and someone my dad loves, who isn't my mother. I sit on my bed, a place that has seen and heard my tears and laughter, where I think about various thoughts. One that sticks in my mind the most is, *a house is not only made up of walls and a roof, it's made up of love and the people who live in it.* Since my dad's girlfriend has been living with us, I don't have these feelings that I had when my mom lived in our house.

It took us forever to find a piece of land that was just right for my mom. She wanted this piece of land to be perfect, where she could hold many special memories. Building this house meant the world to my mom, seeing as how this was her first house she was able to design. A kitchen that included a bar with stools, where she could make breakfast for me every morning before school, two walk-in closets and her own bathroom that had a Jacuzzi, and lastly she wanted a lawn chair out on a deck where she could sit in the sun and read a book. As the house made progress and things were thought to be going well, my mom went to the doctor for some unusual pain. Come to find out, she was diagnosed with ovarian cancer. Not only did she have cancer, she was at stage four out of five. As I sat in the car on our way down to Maine Medical, so many thoughts and questions were going through my head. *How could this have happened to my mom and our family? She is still so young with many years ahead of her. She had done nothing but good in her lifetime and put so many smiles on people's faces.*

As the weeks went on, my mom's cancer got increasingly worse. I had moved to Hawaii to be with my mom's family, while she spent her last few months with the people she loved the most. It has been five years since my mom has passed away and every day doesn't seem to be getting any easier. Living in my mom's "dream house" with my dad's new love, doesn't make things simpler for me either. My mom and I shared many memories in that house and even though it was just for a short amount of time, I'll hold those family memories forever. Just the smell of her Lancome perfume or looking out at her favorite lawn chair still sitting on our deck triggers so many memories that will stick with me for my lifetime.