



Spaces and Places

THE BOOK, *MOLLY MOVES OUT*, ABOUT A bunny who just wanted her own space, was tucked on the second shelf of the bookcase in my sister Courtney's upstairs bedroom. I repeatedly begged her to let me borrow that book, along with so many of her things. Whether it was her pink batwing sweatshirt, her leather braided headband, or a book off of her bookshelf, if it was hers, it had a cool factor that made me want it.

Looking back, I can only imagine how frustrating it must have been for her to have her annoying younger sister pestering to get her hands on all of her cherished possessions. She wanted to be herself, and I was trying to be her, too.

When I was in third grade, the frustration level hit a new high. My mom decided it was time for the childlike wallpaper and curtains in my room to be replaced with something "timeless," so she set to work, flexing her interior design muscles and overhauled the look of the room.

It was a slow process. Carpet was torn out; the old wallpaper was peeled away, leaving bits and pieces here and there, thanks to the industrial powered wallpaper glue that once ruled the décor world. Those leftover pieces that clung to the wall had to be painstakingly scraped and chipped away at, until they finally admitted defeat and fell from the wall.

My mom and I went to Wallflowers wallpaper store and pored over wallpaper books. I desperately wanted a light blue paper that I found in one book, with a vibrant border of bright red, green and blue dancing bears. Much to my dismay, that choice was vetoed, and my mom went with

a soft, elegant Laura Ashley floral paper and matching fabric. It was quite beautiful, but I was distressed about losing my dancing bears.

Also distressed during this time, was my sister, who was forced to share her room with me during the renovations. My box spring and mattress were moved into the corner of her room, while the frame was taken away to be matched with a new headboard. My arrival created a slightly disheveled frat house look in her impeccably clean room. I see, now, why she, on the cusp of Junior High, wasn't happy about having me in her room, and not only having her privacy taken away, but also having to endure my bedding, blankets and a small army of stuffed animals spilling out across her regularly pristine room.

She fought back though, and refused to let me completely take over her room and her life. One Sunday afternoon, tired and wanting to lie on my bed and read, I tried to enter her room. Unbeknownst to my parents though, my sister had enacted strict rules dictating during which hours I was allowed into her room. Those hours were from 7:30 p.m. to 7:30 a.m. Denied entrance midday I trudged down to my room, cracked open the door and took in the sparse and cold scene.

The blinds and curtains were gone, and bright light flooded into the room. The heat vent had been turned to the closed position, so dust wouldn't fly into the room and attach to the still drying paint on the walls. The carpet had been pulled up, and most of the furniture taken out of the room. The one lone piece that remained was the dresser, which was covered in a giant drop cloth, like something out of the movie *E.T.*

Cold, because of the closed heat vent; bright, because of the bare windows, and loud, as every noise ricocheted back and forth across the cavernous space of the empty hardwood-floored room, it was sterile, cold and very uninviting. But I had nowhere to go; it wasn't yet 7:30.

I plodded across the hard floor to the dresser and hoisted myself up on top, stretching out on the plastic covered surface. I was displaced by a renovation.

For anyone who has undertaken a home improvement project, that feeling of being displaced in your own home – of feeling like you are living a nomadic life in your own sanctuary – is a common one. On page 101, with the input of local experts, you can find the help you need to make your improvements or renovations go as quickly and successfully as possible.

The story does have a happy ending. The room was soon finished and looked beautiful (despite the lack of dancing bears). I moved out of Courtney's room, and she had her space restored. Nowadays, when I remind her of the hours she posted for me to enter her room, she's horrified at the memory. She graciously welcomes me into her home at any hour of the day or night now, and we absolutely enjoy our time together.

Like Molly the bunny, we all need our own space; a retreat to which we can go where we can relax, enjoy the quiet and let our minds process. A place to replenish your soul, to relax, to pause and to reflect. May there be plenty of spaces and places in your life in which to find such respite.

Happy reading!

Blythe