

# Fatty's Funeral

By Hannah Goodman

We have just moved into our new house today. It is Victorian with low ceilings, steam radiators, and small closet space. It is off Bellevue Ave. in Newport, down the street from all the mansions, and the water is right behind our house. Despite the low ceilings it isn't a bad place to live.

My mother wants me to get our three big, fat furry cats from the old house which is about eight miles away, in Middletown. She asks me not to forget the litter box.

I drive down Bellevue Ave. feeling a little disoriented. The whirl and buzz of the moving day made a good distraction for me; I have yet to stop and say out loud, "I don't live there any more."

I pull into the large circular driveway of the high-ceilinged house my parents built – their "dream home" – ten years ago. They were married then, and we all thought this would be the last move. We had already moved five times in my short eleven years of life. When we made it past four years here, I thought it had to be permanent. When my parents separated for the first time I thought the same thing – they made it past five years without any talk of Dad moving out again – I figured we were golden.

Then I went to college... "Dad is going to move down to Virginia for a few years" my mother announced on the day of I graduated from high school. The breeze outside the high school smelled like the sand and ocean. I looked at me dad, "Aren't you going to miss the beach?" It turned out he missed a whole lot more. He missed the selling of the house he worked on for four years. He missed the nights my mother rocked and cried herself to sleep after he announced that Virginia was a permanent and *no, no I don't want your mother to move down here.*

I turn off my car realizing that I had been sitting for almost twenty minutes looking at my house. It is cold outside, and I worry that the cats have been outside for too long. I get out of the car and call for them, "Looie, Hobbes, Buddy...Looie"

*I am thirteen years old. My father has just purchased our first camcorder. Looie is only five months old. "Looie look into the camera. Speak, say something." My mother throws a disgusted look straight into the camera, at my father. "Lou-ass," she calls my dad by an "affectionate" pet-name, "He is your name-sake, believe me he won't have an trouble taking." My father focuses back onto Looie, who is trying to master his first big leap to the top of the TV, his soon-to-be favorite sleeping spot (until the day we moved) –the Cable box. Even when his butt got to be too big for it, he slept there, paws and hind legs sprawling all over.*

I stand on the side of the house, staring into the back yard. My eyes are watery from the cold and although my vision is blurred I can still see the grave. Our eighteen-year-old long haired cat, Fatty, is buried there. He died before we moved into the house – he died a month before it was built – before the builders filtered out the forest in the backyard.

*The funeral was on a rainy, windy, cold day. My father had a shovel in one hand, and the iron casket in the other. My mother had a piece of paper with the Kaddish, the Jewish Mourner's prayer. We pushed back all the branches and leaves as we walked through the forest to the very end of the yard. As my father started to dig my mother let out a weird cry, like a painful screeching of a stray cat.*

I wipe my eyes and call for Looie. He finally jumps down from a tree and greets me with a "Meow." I pick him up and search for the other cats. I stroke his soft fur. He seems to have aged so much since my father left. His coat has lost it's luster, and he has started to eat his skin away from his head. The vet says it is nerves and all purebreds have it. My mother won't touch Looie. She says it's because he is so irritated that she doesn't was to hurt him. I noticed that when I am home he isn't scratching his skin as much, and I pet him all the time.

*Last year I walked into the house and my parents were fighting over who should take Looie. My mother was glaring at my father, shaking her fists, "He's your fucking cat. He has your fucking name. You take him – you've dumped everything else on me."*

My mother was wrong. Looie is just a cat. She doesn't have to take her pain out on him.

