

## The House in the Cul-De-Sac

Before I lived in an apartment that felt too small for my two siblings, mom, cat and I, I used to live in a house that is about a twenty-minute drive from where my apartment is. It was a two-story house, painted a rather ugly orange and tan color. The paint was fading in some parts of the walls, meaning there were random black spots dotted around, showing that the previous owners never gave the house and the exterior a second thought.

But to be fair, after a while we didn't either.

When we first moved there, it was my dad that really cared about the way the house looked. He would take care of the lawn, and make sure that it was nice, green, and trimmed. He would always pull out the weeds from the soil, and plant new fruit trees that he hoped would bloom into beautiful trees that would make redwood trees jealous with their height. My dad was also someone that loved to build things with his bare hands- that was why they were always rough and seemed to be beaten up; from the machinery he used and the amount of rough and jagged wooden planks he used to make what he wanted.

My dad first started off by making a fence when our fence that kept our backyard private and hidden from the neighbor's eyes was beginning to sag because of how old it was. I remember I begged my dad to fix it, because in my young mind, the fence kept the rest of the neighborhood blocked from the adventures I had in that backyard. Without that fence, they could see everything I didn't want them to. My dad, after only a couple of days of convincing him to fix it, finally got to work and finished it in less than a week. From then on, he gave himself little projects to do around the house. He built a deck and even built the tables and chairs to go on the deck outside, he built little flower boxes so that his plants and my mom's plants would grow beautifully. The house, a little while after we started living there, really felt like home because I would look around, and I would look at the things my dad built and realize my family and I had made our mark.

The house was ours.

We moved there when I was five years old.

It was a house that was filled with so many memories, some that my family tells me about because I don't remember them, and some that I remember fondly because I was old enough to pick out every detail.

I remember my 7th birthday party- my first and last birthday party in that house.

We had invited my family, and all of the family friends, which to me, seemed to be like we were inviting the whole world from how many people showed up. My family had loads of friends at the time, and all of those friends invited their friends. It was the first time in my life that I had ever been the center of attention of *that* many people, and it was something I enjoyed, but not as much as the Strawberry Shortcake birthday cake presented to me after lunch was served to everyone. After the cake, my parents had surprised me with a pinata that they hung up on a tree in the backyard and I was given the chance to whack it first. I remember feeling the eyes of every kid that had been invited to the party- they wanted me to break the pinata with the two hits that I was allowed to give it. Ultimately, I wasn't the one to give the final blow- that honor belonged to my brother and it made him the coolest kid at the party in a matter of seconds.

It was a fun party, filled with people that I still see often.

And it all took place in the backyard of the house tucked away in the little cul-de-sac that never once changed, in all the years that I lived there.

While my family lived there, my parents finally gave their blessing to let us adopt a dog.

My family had always been fans of having pets. We had a cat before we moved to the house in the Cul-De-Sac, but after he ran away from us, my family decided no more pets until we lived in a bigger house with more room.

Instead of adopting just one dog, we adopted two dogs, along with four pet birds, and some fish.

The dogs, which were named Cheese and Waffle, were glued to my brother and I's side the minute we got them. They were small dogs, Waffle being the taller one of the two. We adopted them at different times, and we feared they wouldn't get along very well. At first, they didn't. Waffle was the one we affectionately named "loveable one" because he was the one that loved attention and loved giving

people kisses and love. His problem was that he would go up to absolutely anyone and expect their love and attention. He was just overall the happiest dog alive all the time and would constantly get himself into trouble because he would never think. Cheese was almost his opposite in that way; he tended to think a lot more than Waffle ever did and he was the one that didn't want anyone's attention or love. He would usually growl and glare if someone tried to cuddle with him, especially while he was eating something.

But while they didn't get along the first time they met, a couple of days later they were closer than we had ever expected them to be. And, in the months and years that passed, they were brothers and best friends.

Their relationship bloomed in the house in the Cul-De-Sac.

I was 14 when we finally left it forever.

By then, things were different. The yard that my dad once loved and cherished, had gone from the brightest green, to the saddest brown, practically crying to us about its sudden death. The lawn was also rarely cut and managed, meaning the weeds were growing in every corner, and the fruit trees that should've grown taller and taller as the years went on, only shriveled and died until the dried branches were left in their place.

Everything had changed in a short amount of time.

My mom and dad had gone from being friends, to barely speaking a word to each other. From sleeping in the same bed, to being in separate rooms. The house itself went from being spotless, to being dirty and chaotic.

And it was when I was 14, that my parents finalized their divorce, and we were moving away, to a new city, to a smaller place, and without Cheese and Waffle. We had to give them away, as moving to an apartment meant we couldn't have dogs.

On the last day of living there, I remember I was lying on my bed. Everything I could remember was being played in my head like a movie, from my 7th birthday party, to my sister's 15th birthday party, to me starting Middle School.

All of it happened under the roof in the house tucked away in the Cul-De-Sac.

And, as I closed the front door for the last time, I said goodbye to it. I thanked it for giving me a roof over my head, for letting me call it “home”, for taking care of my family, and for standing as tall and proud as it was.

It was a house of memories. Memories I keep stored away and whenever I look at the house, all of it comes flooding back in an instant.

And I remember that house in the Cul-De-Sac.

It will always be home to me.