

IN 2008, AFTER A PAINSTAKING SEARCH for the perfect house, my parents decided it was crucial that they guide me in my effort. They found me this newly painted 1948 dilapidated Bauhaus surrounded by a destroyed wood fence located at Bowman Avenue in Merion Station. The public schools in this area were supposed to be superior, but I wasn't desperate, and living conditions was a priority. The infiltration of weeds in the fauna that surrounded the house didn't frighten me. As a matter of fact the statuesque oak and the majestic maple made a grand statement of elegance as we entered the property. Even the living room was appealing. The rope iron railing guided me to a wonderfully molded fireplace with an art deco mirror etched to match and light streamed through the windows giving an essence of paradise. There were only a few torn carpets and if they were raised, you could see that Bruce's fresh finish would redeem the original oak wood floors.

However, as we explored the remainder of the house my heart, like a broken elevator, plummeted to the floor. A nauseating stench infiltrated the next room and worsened with rot and decay as we continued. The kitchen was corroded with a deteriorated floor covering and the sink and various accessories appeared to originate from a broken down cabin from the 1800's haphazardly built in the woods.

Behind the kitchen was a creaking stairwell that led us to a basement that smelled like putrescent dead animals. Infested wood slats lifted the washer and dryer among corroded junk as if it was a safe keeper from flooding that had infiltrated this basement a myriad of times. Another room was positioned to the right of the steps, but the queasiness stirring up in my bowls shortened my investigation. As we continued exploring the rest of the house, it became apparent that new plumbing was inevitable. The tiled bathrooms were cracked and every inch needed some type of reparation. I couldn't handle it. However, my parents found me another house in Penn Valley that I could manage. After living there for a week, my parents informed me that they were moving into the ramshackle I had rejected.

How my mother and father acquired their foresight always became apparent after the fact. They moved in and began their renovation. They slept on a blow-up bed, washed themselves in the one semi-useable bathroom, placed a huge dumpster in the driveway, and began cleaning and throwing out the stink.

As I watched them strip the basement and take out the recess ceilings along with warped doors and walls, the old 1970's solar system that was never used, junk, falling rods and shelves, I was thankful that this was them and not me. Then I realized that they too were happy to be doing what they love most. Every day my mother called, chatting with excitement about the painters and carpenters – how they were cleaning the stainless steel hardware for the doors, painting and resetting the flaps that were falling out of their hinges and bumping against their frames, and rearranging the clothing rods so that there would be more space in the closets. She directed the electricians in order to eliminate any wires that were outdated and made sure this house was wireless. My mother was optimistic about her undertaking.

Skillfully blending the old with the new, one fixture was left in the TV room and the rest were replaced. After nagging and

insisting that the original sinks and tiles needed to be saved, the plumbers acquiesced. My parents delighted in their pursuit. They even saved the original rusty tub to harmonize with the white tiles making sure every inch sparkled as though it was brand new. Only the base was painted so that the original porcelain was saved. Mold and oxidation had ruined some of the tiles and the toilets from the 40's were not fit for my mother's standards. The possibility of saving the old rusted 1948 mirrors was hopeless, so they replaced the recess mirror medicine chests with new ones.

The kitchen was in worse shape than they had realized. There were five layers of putrefied uneven floor coverings that needed to be stripped to the beams. However, after this grueling prerequisite, my parents installed a magnificent mahogany floor. The stainless steel counter top, my mother designed, extended around the kitchen in order to make a breakfast booth enriched with three contemporary leather stools. All of a sudden, the plethora of trees bejeweling the windows that outlined the kitchen, like a Monet painting, became a picturesque paradise.

At ground level, my parents spread their love. They removed unwanted ivy from the trees, trimmed dead branches, pulled undesirable weeds, and planted a magnificent vegetable garden. They fixed the broken wood and locks on the fences. Later I was to find out the multi-talents of my mother when she rang my bell offering me giant tasty cucumbers and tomatoes from her new garden.

My children love to come and play at my parents' renovated place. I could never have handled the effort and finesse my parents exhibited. Their insight and fortitude were more than admirable. It was a house that I could not have purchased but now that it is restored, I pray that they do not sell it.



*ALLEGRA S. COLEMAN began her creative career hosting TV shows at the age of 12. After earning her BFA in theatre, she continued to perform in diverse roles including playing Shakespeare's Puck in *A Midsummer's Night Dream* and Lulu in *The Dutchman*. Her favorite job was with *The Magic Mirror Theater Company*, a children's improvisational traveling show.*

CONTACT: Allegrascoleman@gmail.com

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