

## The Closing Door

*Rachael Goldman*

What I remember most about moving was the echo that sounded as Dad went through the house, now empty of all the essentials which had made it home, and shut each door. Speaking to no one, he said, "This'll hold the heat in until the new people move in."

Peg was just a kid then, no more than five or six. She stood next to Mom, holding her hand and crying softly. Mom said nothing, did nothing. Her face was blank, her eyes vague and empty.

She'd worked hard for weeks to pack up the house. Two days before, while going through the attic, she came across an old scrapbook. I'd seen the attic door open and ventured up the dark padded steps. I caught sight of her sitting on an old trunk, a moth-eaten, silky gown hanging behind her. From where I stood, hidden from her view by boxes piled high against a wall, I could see the dust covering her Levis and the loose strands of her fair hair clinging to her damp cheeks. I watched for a long time as she thumbed obliviously through the yellowed pages, at times softly giggling, at times sighing and running her gentle hand over the page.

I snuck quietly back down the steps thinking how beautiful she was and wondering if I'd ever be able to tell her in words how close to her I felt in those few minutes. She had spoken barely a word when she came down from the attic and for the time we remained there in that half-naked house, she was silent.

Dad spoke optimistically about California, his new job, our new life. "Just think, Mike, it's warm all year round. We'll be able to throw the ball around in the middle of January." I was ten and knew that I couldn't cry around him so I smiled at his words, shook my head in what I hoped resembled optimistic affirmation,

and felt deep within me the dreary sadness which seemed to permeate the very rooms of our house.

The moving men had the truck packed and were on their way. Mom stood mute in the middle of the living room, absentmindedly clutching Peg's hand, staring at the wall in front of her, at the fireplace, where the family portrait with its smiling faces had hung.

Dad slowly walked towards her, gently squeezed her shoulder. "Ready?" he whispered. She reached down, pulled Peg's little body into her arms and hugged it close as she walked out the front door.

Dad looked at me where I stood, leaning against a wall. "Ready to go, son?" Suddenly I knew that it didn't matter that I was the best first baseman in the league or that Joey and I had worked so hard planning a biology experiment for class. "C'mon Mike," he said gently. I wanted to shout "No!" I remember wishing that I were Peg, that Dad would walk over, pick me up in his strong arms and carry me out. Instead, I pushed myself bodily away from the wall towards the front door.

Silently, heads down, we stepped into the porch where a chill wind attacked us. "We won't have any of this cold in California, son. You'll love it!"

I turned my back to his words and the front door, which he was slowly closing. The wind shook the branches of the tree that I first learned to climb. I glanced at the barespot in the grass that had always served as home plate.

Then Dad finally, firmly shut the front door and turned the key in the lock. It was that sound that filled my ears; above the roar of fright, confusion, sadness, above the cold wind and the laughter of my friends playing up the block, the vacant thud of that closing door was what I heard. It crashed and echoed through my body and soul. It sounded like heavy footsteps in an empty marble hallway—ominous, distant, cold. As I look back, I see that the echo was nothing more than the fears of a young boy leaving behind all the things he's ever known and loved, and going into a new world which he really had little inclination to explore. But I find, even now, I'm still apt to leave doors ajar.