

My kitchen on rhode island st

3/1/17

My leftover pancakes are cold

The sun is reflecting off of the corner of the table in a way it usually only does in the summer

There is a hole in my new leggings

My sausages are chewy

We are out of syrup

It is silent

11/14/2018

I reach down to bring the small gray space heater closer to my legs

And in consequence further from my fathers

I know he noticed but he won't say anything

He pauses to check how many pages are left in the chapter

I glance up from my phone to make sure he's still awake

he takes a deep breath and continues to read aloud the book assigned for this week of my science fiction class

"no one of intelligence resents the inevitable"

His voice is interrupted by the whistle of a red kettle on the stove

The cat asleep on my father's lap startles awake and runs out of the room

He sets the book down in the way we are taught to never set a book down for it damages the binding

The whistling dies down as he removes it from the burner and is replaced by a soft humming from my father

If asked what tune he was humming he wouldn't have an answer

He pours the boiling water into two mugs

One with tiny poorly done paintings of him, my sister, and I next to our two cats

The other with the words "girls' rule"

I return my gaze to the screen in my hands

Illuminated with an electronic paint by number

The final image will show a child holding a flower

Right now, it more closely resembles snow falling on a city landscape

My father returns to the table with the mugs of tea

He picks up Childhood's End from where he left it face down

Scans the page for where he left off

Pulls his blanket tight around his neck

And starts on the last eight pages of the chapter

4/22/2019

The table seems to flinch as I throw today's pile of mail on an ever-growing stack of papers

Bills and catalogs atop old homework assignments, notable news articles, grocery lists,

various sketches, and bills and catalogs  
The scattering of used glasses and half melted candles sticking out of the mess like  
skyscrapers in a flood  
I fix myself a bowl cereal and clear my space enough to place the dish  
Two groggy cats circle my feet  
Searching for any kibble that I may have dropped while making breakfast  
As I eat, I watch TV on my phone  
At the quietest volume I can stand  
Propping it up on my juice glass from yesterday that has transformed into my milk glass  
for today  
The window is providing the light for the room  
As well as a glare on my screen no matter where I set it  
The stairs creak  
I turn off my phone  
My father walks in waving with a bright "good morning"  
Like a tour guide greeting their eager group of the day  
He grabs the milk off the table  
Checking its weight before returning it to the fridge  
Before joining me at the table he flicks on the overhead light  
"Why are you sitting here in the dark?"

4/2/20

My cat leaps onto the metal bin in the corner and the scene resumes  
Someone turns on the tap upstairs  
Not full strength but the light drip can be heard through the thin floorboards, braced by  
a few planks of wood rather than a proper ceiling  
I watch a bead of sweat run down the side of the milk carton as it patiently waits to be  
put away  
A task ignored by whoever had cereal this morning  
When it reaches the table, the condensation joins a small puddle being absorbed by the  
napkin sitting beneath the carton, as if the whole act was planned  
Like someone was looking to make a point  
But not a mess  
I grab the milk and bring it to the refrigerator, shaking droplets to the floor as I walk  
Returning to my seat alone at the cluttered table feels like waking up alone after hosting  
a party  
Each spot at the table scattered with a specific set of belongings  
Schoolwork, pills, mugs, grocery lists, chocolates from the previous holiday, mail, and  
trinkets  
But those who each belonged to were absent  
As if plucked from their chairs without warning  
Taking only the essentials  
Not schoolwork, pills, mugs, grocery lists, chocolates from the previous holiday, mail or  
trinkets

I stand up from my seat and push in my chair behind me, causing the cat asleep by the food dishes to jump awake  
She's reminded that she was waiting vigilantly for lunch and returns to her post

1/5/21

My spot at the table is as cluttered as ever  
I know I cleaned it in august  
I glance over to where a pile of mail sits neatly organized  
Addressed to my mother  
The pile a few inches away reads my sister's name  
In front of me is my favorite bowl  
I haven't eaten cereal in months  
A cat nuzzles against my leg  
Then runs over to the three half full food dishes  
Half empty in their eyes  
A book sits on the corner of the table  
Something I've never heard of  
Its new  
The binding perfectly intact  
I take my bowl and fill it with 5-minute grits  
Returning the cereal to the cabinet  
Before I leave, I turn off all of the lights that didn't really need to be on in the first place